

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Committee on  
Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate

October 1998

BOSNIA PEACE  
OPERATION

Mission, Structure, and  
Transition Strategy of  
NATO's Stabilization  
Force



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United States  
General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

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National Security and  
International Affairs Division

B-281072

October 8, 1998

The Honorable Jesse Helms  
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations  
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The December 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its supporting annexes (also known as the Dayton Agreement) provided the structure and mandates for an international operation intended to promote an enduring peace in Bosnia and stability in the region. In mid-December 1997, recognizing the continued need for an international military force in Bosnia, President Clinton announced that the United States would continue to take part in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led military force in Bosnia—known as the Stabilization Force (SFOR)—after June 1998, thereby enabling the Bosnia peace operation's civilian aspects to proceed in a secure atmosphere. The operation's civilian aspects include efforts to return refugees and displaced people to their homes across ethnic lines; develop democratic, multiethnic governments at all levels; and ensure that persons indicted for war crimes are brought to justice.

As requested, this report provides information on (1) how SFOR's operations in Bosnia have changed since mid-1997, particularly its support for the operation's civil aspects, and whether any such changes have exceeded SFOR's defined mission; (2) the mission and force structure of the post-June 1998 SFOR follow-on force, including the decision-making sequence for U.S. participation in the force and the status of developing the force's new Multinational Specialized Unit; and (3) NATO's transition strategy for removing NATO-led forces from Bosnia. Appendix I provides background information on the overall structure of the military and civilian components of the Bosnia peace operation.

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## Our Prior Reports on the Bosnia Peace Operation

We have reviewed progress in implementing the Dayton Agreement's military and civilian provisions since early 1996. In May 1997, we reported that the Bosnia peace operation had helped Bosnia take important first steps toward the Dayton Agreement's goals.<sup>1</sup> The NATO-led military forces—first the Implementation Force (IFOR) and later SFOR—had created

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<sup>1</sup>Bosnia Peace Operation: Progress Toward Achieving the Dayton Agreement's Goals (GAO/NSIAD-97-132, May 5, 1997). See also Bosnia Peace Operation: Progress Toward the Dayton Agreement's Goals—An Update (GAO/T-NSIAD-97-216, July 17, 1997).

and sustained an environment that allowed the peace process to move forward and Bosnians to begin returning to normal life. Nevertheless, while the task of implementing the civil aspects of the Dayton Agreement had begun, Bosnia remained politically and ethnically divided due principally to the failure of the political leaders of Bosnia's three major ethnic groups to embrace political and social reconciliation and to fulfill their obligations under the Dayton Agreement. Many western observers told us that based on the current pace of political and social change in Bosnia, some sort of international military force would likely be needed there for many years to deter an outbreak of hostilities while Bosnians continue the reconciliation process.

In June 1998, we reported that the pace of implementing the Dayton Agreement had accelerated beginning in mid-1997, due to a renewed commitment and level of effort—both political and military—by the international community.<sup>2</sup> This renewed commitment led to an increased and intense involvement of the operation's civilian and military organizations in implementing the agreement. Their efforts, combined with international pressure on Bosnia's political leaders and positive political changes in the country, helped to accelerate the pace of Dayton implementation. However, we reported that conditions in Bosnia will have to improve significantly before international military forces could substantially draw down; even with the accelerated pace of implementing the agreement, it will likely be some time before these conditions are realized.

## Results in Brief

The increased emphasis on implementing the Dayton Agreement that began in mid-1997 included an intensified effort by SFOR to support the agreement's civil provisions. For example, SFOR began taking a more active role in efforts to return people to their prewar homes in areas controlled by another ethnic group, detain persons indicted for war crimes, and elect and install multiethnic governments at all levels. In the spring of 1998, SFOR also began to support a March 1998 U.N. Security Council resolution to stop the flow of arms and other military assistance to Serbia's province of Kosovo, where fighting had broken out, and to other areas of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). These efforts by SFOR are consistent with its mission as defined by the Dayton Agreement and NATO operation plans. Although SFOR's support for the civilian aspects of the peace operation increased, the force continued to employ most of its

<sup>2</sup>See Bosnia Peace Operation: Pace of Implementing Dayton Accelerated as International Involvement Increased (GAO/NSIAD-98-138, June 5, 1998).

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resources to control the Bosniak, Bosnian Croat, and Bosnian Serb militaries, its primary mission.<sup>3</sup>

The mission and force structure of the SFOR follow-on force—which will also be called SFOR—will remain largely the same as prior to June 1998. SFOR levels in Bosnia increased from about 31,700 troops in August 1998 to about 36,100 troops at the time of the September elections in Bosnia<sup>4</sup> but are expected to decrease again by November 1998. In light of SFOR's need to deal with civil disturbances, NATO established a new Multinational Specialized Unit, a paramilitary- or gendarmerie-type unit, within SFOR. As of September 1998, only part of the specialized unit was operational because countries have not yet committed sufficient resources to the unit. This new unit will not replace U.S. or other SFOR combat units.

After considering several military analyses and a range of factors, including improvements in Republika Srpska's political environment during late 1997 and early 1998, the executive branch decided in January 1998 to reduce the U.S. troop level for the SFOR follow-on force from about 8,500 troops in Bosnia to about 6,900 troops. After the drawdown decision was made, the U.S. military identified ways to reduce U.S. force levels.<sup>5</sup> NATO then lowered operational requirements for the follow-on force. NATO will continue its practice of reviewing SFOR operations every 6 months to determine whether SFOR force levels could be further reduced.

NATO has developed a transition strategy for an eventual disengagement from Bosnia. As of September 1998, NATO had not fully developed specific criteria for determining when conditions would allow SFOR combat units to

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<sup>3</sup>The war in Bosnia was fought among Bosnia's three major ethnic/religious groups—Bosniaks (Muslims), Serbs (Eastern Orthodox Christians), and Croats (Roman Catholics)—the latter two being supported directly by the republics of Serbia and Croatia, respectively. This report defines "Bosniaks" as "Muslims," the definition used in State Department human rights reports.

<sup>4</sup>Bosnia held a countrywide election for national and entity-level governments on September 12 and 13, 1998. These elections were supervised by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Bosnia consists of two entities: (1) Republika Srpska, the Bosnian Serb Republic; and (2) the Federation, the Bosniak-Bosnian Croat entity.

<sup>5</sup>U.S. force levels were reduced to 6,900 troops in Bosnia by mid-July 1998. The number of U.S. troops in Bosnia was scheduled to increase to between 10,500 to 11,300 troops around the time of Bosnia's September 1998 elections due to a planned troop rotation and to decrease back to 6,900 by November 1998. U.S. SFOR and non-SFOR personnel in Croatia would remain at about 500, while the number of U.S. troops in Italy and Hungary supporting the SFOR operation—but not part of SFOR—had decreased from about 3,600 troops down to 2,600 troops by July 1998.

draw down and withdraw, but was in the process of doing so.<sup>6</sup> The NATO transition strategy consists largely of turning over various activities to local authorities or the peace operation's civilian organizations as conditions permit. The transition strategy calls for the Multinational Specialized Unit to leave Bosnia before or at the same time as SFOR's combat units. According to Department of Defense (DOD) and NATO officials, specific drawdown criteria are expected to be developed before NATO's next 6-month review of SFOR operations.<sup>7</sup> During this review, NATO will assess changes to the security and political conditions in Bosnia, including the results of the September 1998 elections, and determine whether SFOR force levels could be further reduced.

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## Intensified SFOR Operations

In mid-1997, SFOR intensified its support for the civilian aspects of the Dayton Agreement and later began operations that supported the United Nations arms embargo against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. At the same time, SFOR continued its primary mission of controlling the three militaries in Bosnia. SFOR's actions in all of these areas were consistent with its Dayton mission and were part of much broader international efforts that helped accelerate the pace of Dayton implementation.

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## Increased SFOR Support for Dayton's Civil Aspects

With the increased international emphasis on implementing the Dayton Agreement, beginning in mid-1997 SFOR increased its support for the civilian components of the peace operation. This increased support is consistent with SFOR's authority as specified in annex 1A of the Dayton Agreement. The agreement specified that if resources were available and assistance were requested, NATO-led forces were to (1) help create secure conditions for the conduct of other Dayton Agreement tasks, such as elections; (2) assist the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international organizations in their humanitarian missions; (3) observe and prevent interference with the movement of civilian populations, refugees, and displaced persons and respond appropriately to deliberate violence to life and person; and (4) monitor the clearing of minefields and obstacles.

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<sup>6</sup>The U.S. executive branch prepared what it referred to as "benchmarks" in early 1998; however, these "benchmarks" are not intended to provide criteria for determining when NATO forces can draw down or withdraw; instead, the executive branch believes that they represent the point at which Dayton implementation can continue without the support of a major NATO-led military force. The executive branch did not define what constitutes a major NATO-led military force.

<sup>7</sup>According to a July 28, 1998, letter from President Clinton to Congress, NATO is also expected to develop an estimate of the time likely to be required for implementation of the military and civilian aspects of the Dayton Agreement based on the criteria. The letter states that while they will be useful as a tool to promote and review the pace of Dayton implementation, these estimated target dates will be notional, and their attainment will be dependent upon a complex set of interdependent factors.

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SFOR's support for civilian aspects of the operation was often provided indirectly as SFOR conducted its primary military mission. For example, SFOR's general security presence has ensured that fighting among the three militaries in Bosnia has not resumed, thereby allowing the operation's civilian organizations to continue their work and the people of Bosnia to proceed with the long process of political and social reconciliation. Further, during August 1997 SFOR began to take control of special police as called for by annex 1A of the Dayton Agreement,<sup>8</sup> a step toward disbanding and disarming them and/or bringing them under the U.N. restructuring program for civilian police. This move helped convince Bosnian Serb political leaders to begin to participate in the U.N. police restructuring program in September 1997.

In other cases, SFOR provided more direct support for the implementation of the civil aspects of the Dayton Agreement, primarily by providing a security presence, as shown in table 1.

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<sup>8</sup>Although special police had always been considered military forces under annex 1A of the Dayton Agreement, NATO-led forces in Bosnia had not taken steps to control them until mid-1997, when requested to do so by the High Representative.

**Table 1: SFOR Support for the Civil Aspects of the Dayton Agreement Since Mid-1997**

Civil aspect	SFOR support
Freedom of movement	Since May 1997, SFOR has supported international efforts to increase freedom of movement in Bosnia by helping the U.N. International Police Task Force (IPTF) to enforce its police checkpoint policy. <sup>a</sup> SFOR assisted IPTF by confiscating weapons and identity cards of noncompliant police; jointly patrolling with IPTF's unarmed police monitors in certain sensitive geographic areas, such as the strategically important area of Brcko; and by cooperating in removing 38 of 151 identified illegal checkpoints (as of mid-March 1998). <sup>b</sup>
Minority returns <sup>c</sup>	In June/July 1997, SFOR troops began to provide general and local security for people returning to their prewar homes across ethnic lines. SFOR's security presence has been the most important confidence-building measure thus far for these returnees. In the spring of 1998, during a period of increased violent incidents associated with visits and returns across ethnic lines, SFOR began to coordinate international efforts at all levels to ensure a phased and orderly return process.
Detention of war crimes indictees	From July 10, 1997, through October 2, 1998, SFOR troops detained nine persons indicted for war crimes; <sup>d</sup> no persons indicted for war crimes had been detained by NATO-led troops in Bosnia during 1996 and the first half of 1997. These detentions, along with other international efforts, helped encourage other indictees to surrender voluntarily to the international war crimes tribunal. From April 28, 1997, through October 2, 1998, a total of 26 indictees were surrendered to the tribunal, over three times as many as had been surrendered prior to that time; three of the indictees were later released due to lack of evidence.
Arms control	SFOR assisted OSCE in its efforts to gain Bosnian Serb compliance with arms reductions targets <sup>e</sup> by (1) restricting the Bosnian Serb military's movements and training as a means of forcing compliance, (2) inspecting military storage and installations to account for heavy weapons, and (3) helping to transport weapons to their reduction sites. All parties met their arms reductions requirements by the October 31, 1997, deadline.
Demining	SFOR helped U.S. and international civilian organizations establish an indigenous demining capacity in Bosnia. Specifically, SFOR has (1) trained and equipped 450 military deminers from all three militaries in Bosnia and monitored their performance; (2) trained 71 military demining instructors in late 1997, who in turn trained 430 deminers in early 1998; and (3) established three military demining training centers in Bosnia that are staffed by the SFOR-trained demining instructors.

<sup>a</sup>This policy prohibited any fixed or mobile checkpoint that (1) was manned by two or more police officers and (2) operated for more than 30 minutes without a valid IPTF checkpoint permit.

<sup>b</sup>SFOR has also supported, on a case-by-case basis, IPTF-led inspections of local police stations. During these inspections, according to a NATO document, weapons in excess of the expected inventory are immediately confiscated and subsequently destroyed.

<sup>c</sup>"Minority returns" refers to people that return to areas under the control of another ethnic group. In many cases, the group that is currently in the minority was in the majority before the war and would return to majority status if all internally displaced persons and refugees returned.

<sup>d</sup>Another indictee was shot and killed by SFOR soldiers after he fired at them. On July 22, 1998, SFOR soldiers incorrectly identified and detained two people and later transferred them to International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the Hague, the Netherlands (hereafter referred to as the international war crimes tribunal), based on the belief that they had been indicted by the tribunal.

<sup>e</sup>Bosnian Serb political leaders had largely not complied with interim arms reduction targets as of December 31, 1996. This policy changed during the summer of 1997.

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**SFOR Support for the Civil Aspects of the Dayton Agreement Since Mid-1997 (continued)**


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Civil aspect	SFOR support
Media	<p>During October 1997, SFOR supported the High Representative—the lead international civilian official in Bosnia—in his attempts to curtail media that “blatantly and persistently” violated the Dayton Agreement by taking control of five radio and television transmitters operated by Bosnian Serb hard-liners. This move shut down inflammatory broadcasts aimed against the international community and allowed the reform of the Bosnian Serb media network to begin under international supervision.</p> <p>On May 20, 1998, SFOR began a phased withdrawal from the five transmitter towers; as of early September 1998, four of the five towers had been returned to Bosnian Serb authorities. Following withdrawal from all of the towers, SFOR will continue to ensure the network’s compliance with its restructuring agreement by media monitoring, routine patrols of the tower sites, and unannounced technical inspections of the network’s tower equipment.</p>
Electing and installing multiethnic governments	<p>SFOR supported OSCE in preparing for and administering Bosnia’s municipal elections held in September 1997 and Republika Srpska’s National Assembly elections held in November 1997. Among other things, SFOR ensured increased security during the polling periods; provided significant planning and logistics support to OSCE, such as the transportation of ballots and other election materials; and provided personnel to the OSCE/SFOR joint elections operations center.<sup>1</sup> These elections resulted in a more pluralistic political culture and began the process of developing multiethnic governments throughout Bosnia.</p> <p>In late 1997 and early 1998, SFOR supported international efforts to install the newly elected, relatively moderate Republika Srpska government by, among other things, increasing patrols and establishing observation posts in the vicinity of Republika Srpska government offices in and around Pale, the base of Bosnian Serb hard-liners. SFOR also assisted OSCE in helping to form multiethnic municipal councils and governments by ensuring a safe environment for, and freedom of movement to, council meetings in contentious areas.</p>
Establishing Bosnia’s national institutions	<p>SFOR supported the High Representative’s efforts to establish Bosnia’s national institutions that would link the country’s three major ethnic groups, primarily by providing security, communications, and liaison to meetings of the Standing Committee on Military Matters. The committee, which was established in early June 1997 and has met infrequently since then, was designed to coordinate the activities of the three militaries in Bosnia at the national level.<sup>9</sup></p>
Opening civilian airports	<p>SFOR, which controls the airspace over Bosnia, worked with the Office of the High Representative (OHR) to open up Bosnia’s regional airports by, among other things, ensuring that there were no technical grounds to preclude making the airports available to civilian traffic.</p>

<sup>1</sup>The precursor to SFOR—IFOR—provided similar support to OSCE during Bosnia’s September 1996 elections.

<sup>9</sup>Although the Bosniak and Bosnian Croat armed forces are attempting to merge into a unified Federation Army, each of the three major ethnic groups—Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, and Bosniaks—still maintains its own separate military. This condition must evolve into a unified armed forces, according to a State Department official, if Bosnia is to become a unified country. As an interim measure under the Dayton Agreement, the Standing Committee on Military Matters is to coordinate the activities of the armed forces. An international official was appointed coordinator to the committee’s secretariat in March 1998.



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According to officials from the U.S. mission to NATO, the North Atlantic Council<sup>9</sup> provided guidance and approved additional rules of engagement specifically for SFOR's operations against the Bosnian Serb media. The council did not provide additional guidance for other SFOR operations that support the civil aspects of the peace agreement since these operations were already covered by existing rules of engagement.

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## SFOR's Military Tasks Related to Kosovo

In late April/early May 1998, according to a NATO report, SFOR stepped up its military operations near Bosnia's border with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to help ensure compliance with a U.N. Security Council arms embargo related to the escalating crisis in Serbia's province of Kosovo. For the purpose of fostering peace and stability in Kosovo, the Security Council called on all countries to prevent the sale or supply of arms and related materiel to Kosovo and other areas of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.<sup>10</sup> The prohibition covered such things as the sale and supply of weapons and ammunition; military vehicles, equipment, and spare parts; and training for terrorist activities. This resolution was aimed at preventing the participants in the Kosovo conflict—Serbs and ethnic Albanian Muslims—from receiving illicit military assistance from outside actors.

According to a senior SFOR officer, the increased monitoring of the border and other tasks associated with SFOR support for the arms embargo do not constitute a new mission for SFOR but are an integral part of SFOR's original mission to keep the peace in Bosnia. He explained that SFOR will have failed in its mission if the nationalist passions and anger of the Kosovo conflict—the same things that started the war in Bosnia—are allowed to permeate the country. Thus, the specific tasks being conducted by SFOR are designed to create a climate that does not allow Serb and Muslim extremists to inflame passions inside Bosnia.

This view was reinforced by a NATO Secretary General's report that concluded SFOR is conducting Kosovo-related operations under the authority of annex 1A of the Dayton Agreement. Specifically, the agreement gives SFOR "the unimpeded right to observe, monitor, and inspect any Forces, facility or activity in Bosnia and Herzegovina that the [SFOR] believes may have military capability. The refusal, interference, or

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<sup>9</sup>The North Atlantic Council is the political leadership of NATO, which comprises 16 countries: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

<sup>10</sup>U.N. Security Council resolution 1160 dated March 31, 1998.

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denial by any Party of this right to observe, monitor, and inspect by the [SFOR] shall constitute a breach of this Annex and the violating Party shall be subject to military action by the [SFOR], including the use of necessary force to ensure compliance with this Annex."<sup>11</sup>

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## SFOR's Continuing Military Tasks

Throughout 1997 and 1998, SFOR continued to fulfill tasks associated with its primary mission of enforcing the Dayton Agreement's military aspects, as outlined in annex 1A of the agreement. Under SFOR supervision, the three militaries in Bosnia continued to observe the October 1995 cease-fire and to keep their forces separated. The militaries also demobilized additional troops, bringing their forces down to 55,500 soldiers by October 1997.<sup>12</sup> SFOR enforced compliance with the military provisions of the Dayton Agreement by continually patrolling throughout the country, including in the zone of separation;<sup>13</sup> routinely monitoring and inspecting SFOR-approved military storage sites and installations; and monitoring SFOR-approved military training and movement activities.<sup>14</sup>

According to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR),<sup>15</sup> because the Dayton Agreement's military objectives have largely been achieved, SFOR is in a position to provide broad support to civil implementation, within its existing mandate and capabilities. IFOR had largely accomplished Dayton's military objectives by the end of its mission in December 1996,

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<sup>11</sup>Article VI, paragraph 6, of annex 1A of the Dayton Agreement.

<sup>12</sup>At the time of the October 1995 cease-fire, the three militaries in Bosnia had over 400,000 men under arms, including civilian militias and an estimated 45,000 police that fought in conjunction with the three armies.

<sup>13</sup>The zone of separation is an area generally 2 kilometers wide on each side of the interentity boundary line between Bosnia's two entities—the Federation and Republika Srpska.

<sup>14</sup>During 1997, under SFOR direction, the three militaries reduced the number of their military storage sites and installations (cantonment sites) by 29 percent, from 770 sites to 545 sites; SFOR in early 1998 directed a further 25-percent reduction in cantonment sites by the end of February 1999.

<sup>15</sup>SACEUR is a U.S. Army general officer who is also the Commander in Chief, U.S. European Command. For purposes of this report, we refer to him only as "SACEUR." As the Commander in Chief, U.S. European Command, this general officer has the authority to plan and conduct U.S. land, maritime, and air operations within the command's geographic area of responsibility, which includes Bosnia and other areas of the Balkans region. As SACEUR, he is responsible for, among other things, the development of NATO defense plans, the determination of NATO force requirements, and the deployment and exercise of NATO forces under his command or control.

thereby allowing SFOR to be deployed with about half the force levels of IFOR.<sup>16</sup>

## SFOR's Follow-on Force

On June 15, 1998, the U.N. Security Council authorized the SFOR follow-on force, also known as SFOR, for a 12-month mission but left open the possibility that the authorization could be extended if warranted by the situation in Bosnia and developments in implementing the Dayton Agreement.<sup>17</sup> SFOR's mission will remain the same, but overall SFOR force levels are expected to decrease by November 1998. In January 1998, based on many political-military considerations such as improved conditions in Bosnia, the executive branch decided to draw down U.S. forces in Bosnia from about 8,500 troops to about 6,900 troops. After the United States decided to draw down troops, NATO lowered the operational requirements for the SFOR follow-on force. The new Multinational Specialized Unit began operations in late August 1998 but with force levels far below operational requirements due to the lack of force commitments from troop contributing countries.

## Mission and Force Structure

The mission of the follow-on force will continue to be to (1) deter renewed hostilities and (2) contribute to a secure environment for ongoing civil implementation efforts in order to stabilize and consolidate the peace. As with IFOR and the first SFOR mission, the SFOR follow-on force has the authority to use force to ensure the parties' compliance with annex 1A and force protection.

According to NATO documents, SFOR will continue, within its means and capabilities, to provide broad support for the implementation of the Dayton Agreement's civil aspects. Specifically, it will assist

- UNHCR as a matter of high priority, with the phased and orderly return of refugees;
- IPTF in the reform and restructuring of Bosnia's local police;
- OSCE in support of Bosnia's September 1998 elections, including the installation of elected officials;

<sup>16</sup>The transfer of authority from the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) to IFOR took place on December 20, 1995. IFOR was deployed with about 60,000 troops and was to complete its mission and be withdrawn from Bosnia by December 1996. Recognizing the continued need for an international military force, in December 1996 the North Atlantic Council authorized a new mission—SFOR—for an 18-month period. SFOR had an authorized force level of 31,000 troops but consistently maintained somewhat higher force levels throughout 1997.

<sup>17</sup>U.N. Security Council resolution 1174.

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- the international war crimes tribunal by transferring persons indicted for war crimes to the tribunal; and
  - the High Representative in implementing the civil aspects of the agreement.

SFOR will retain its existing force structure of three multinational divisions in Bosnia led by the United States, France, and the United Kingdom, as well as air, naval, and support units located outside of Bosnia (see figs. 1 and 2). The number and nationality of maneuver brigades and battalions within the three multinational divisions will generally remain the same<sup>18</sup> (see app. II). The United States will remain the largest force provider to SFOR, and Americans will continue to hold the key NATO military positions that control the operation.

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<sup>18</sup>The only exception is the addition of a Belgian battalion and the withdrawal of a Malaysian battalion.

Figure 1: Map of SFOR's Military Sectors in Bosnia

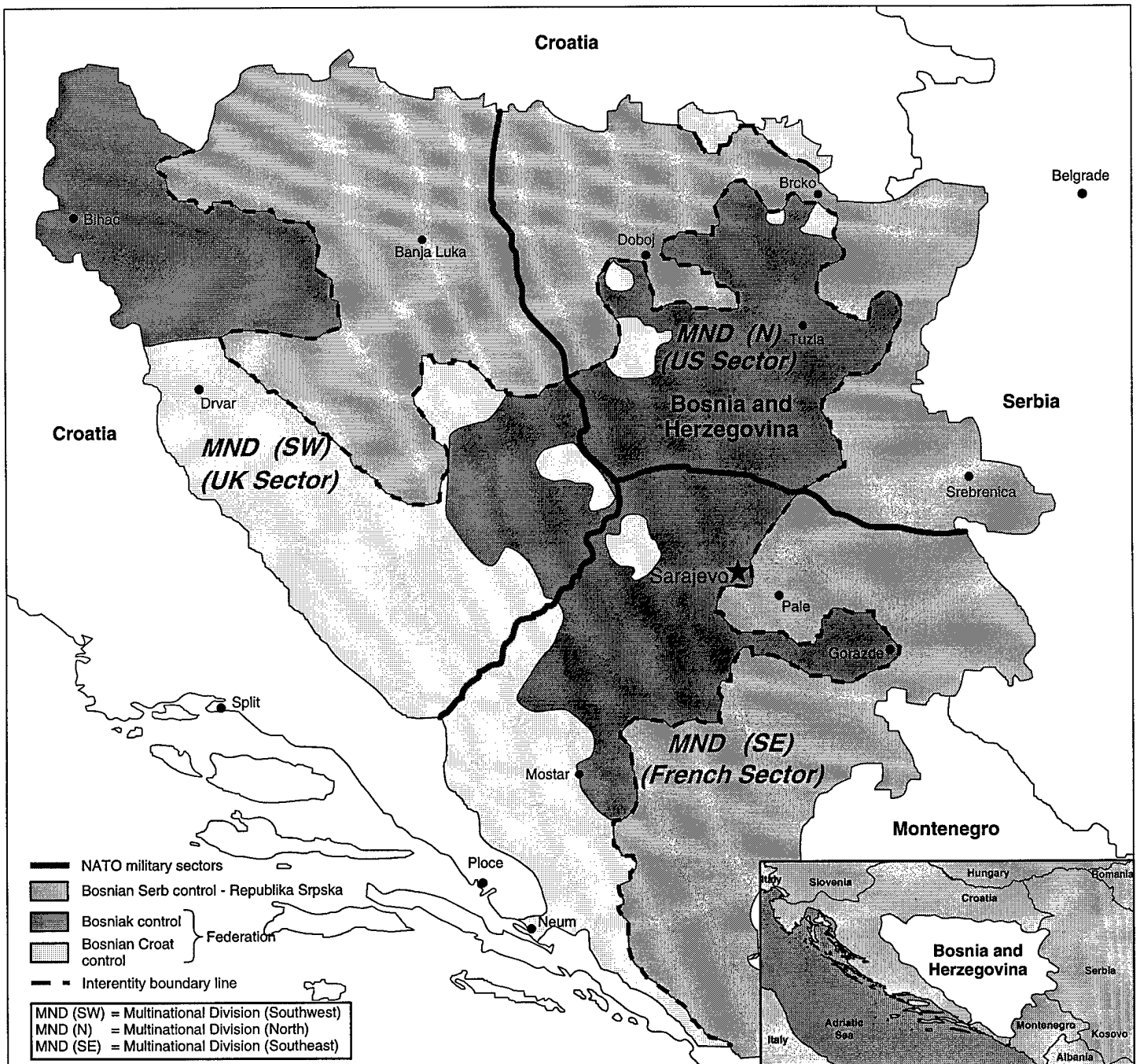
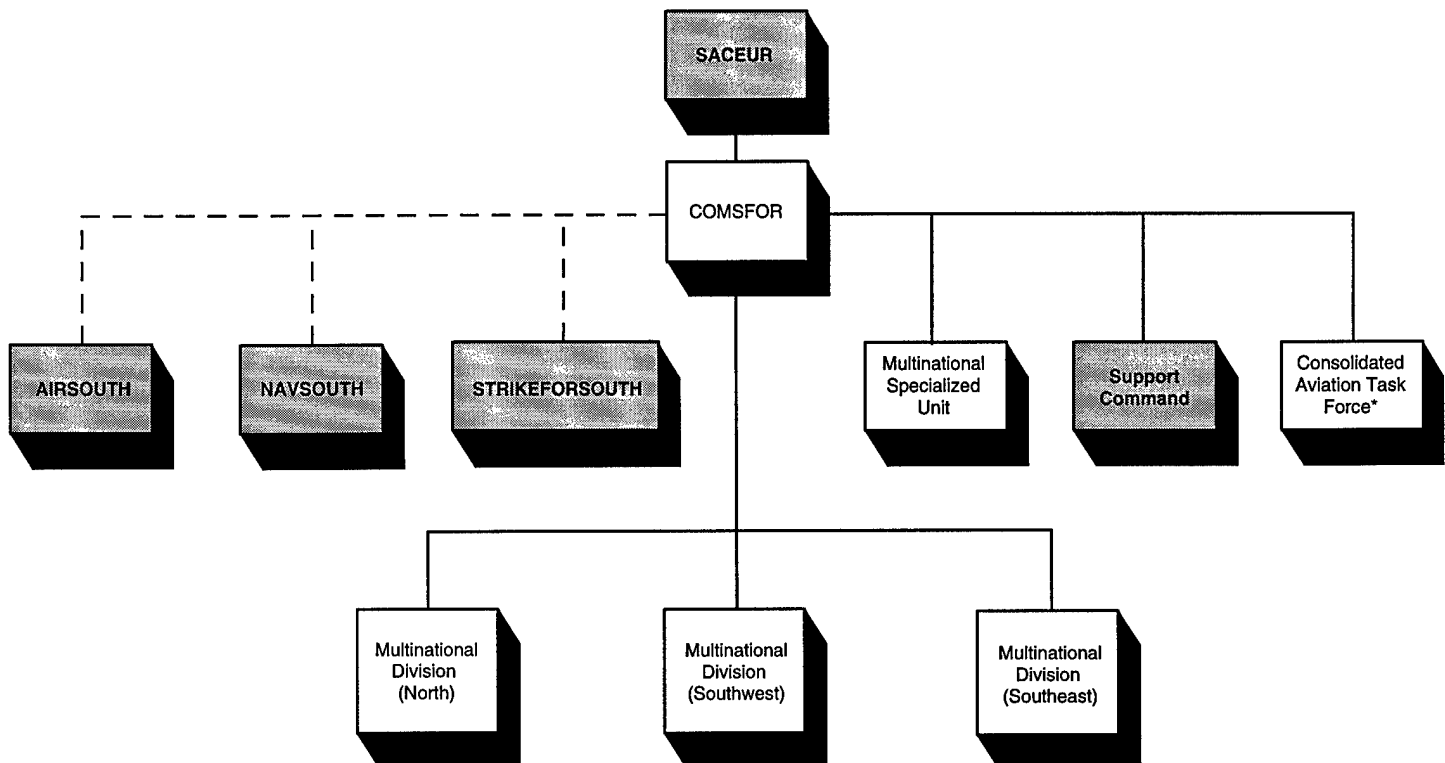


Figure 2: Organization of the SFOR Follow-on Force, as of August 1998



- Deployed in Bosnia  
 Deployed outside Bosnia  
 Operational authority  
 Direct support provided by units of NATO's Allied Forces Southern Europe Command

#### Legend

AIRSOUTH = Allied Air Forces, Southern Europe  
 COMSFOR = Commander Stabilization Force  
 NAVSOUTH = Allied Naval Forces, Southern Europe  
 SACEUR = Supreme Allied Commander Europe  
 STRIKEFORSOUTH = Naval Striking and Support Forces, Southern Europe

\*Dual function: provides SFOR's operational reserve for all of Bosnia and provides sector support for the U.S. - led Multinational Division (North).

In preparation for the SFOR 6-month review due in December 1997, and in contemplation of a possible drawdown, NATO had performed a troop-to-task analysis for a smaller force<sup>19</sup> with a relatively restricted mission called for under the first SFOR operation plan. Under this plan, NATO would have executed a phased drawn down to reduced deterrence force levels when security conditions in Bosnia had substantially improved. The U.S. military contribution to this force would have been 6,900 troops, with a significantly reduced force structure. In December 1997, the North Atlantic Council—based on NATO military authorities' assessment of SFOR operations—determined that conditions in Bosnia would not allow SFOR to draw down to those levels for the foreseeable future.

## U.S. Decision to Draw Down Forces in Bosnia

In late January 1998, the President decided that the United States would prefer to contribute about 6,900 troops to the SFOR follow-on force in Bosnia rather than continue to provide about 8,500 troops. NATO lowered its operational requirements for the follow-on force after the United States decided to draw down its forces. The U.S. drawdown occurred by mid-July 1998. The number of U.S. troops in Bosnia increased to between 10,500 and 11,300 troops by mid-September 1998 and, under current plans, will decrease to 6,900 troops by November.<sup>20</sup>

## Factors Considered in Decision-making Process

In describing the decision-making process, DOD officials told us that during December 1997 and January 1998 DOD had considered a wide range of political-military factors in deciding on the U.S. contribution to the SFOR follow-on force. They said that DOD's decision to recommend a draw down to 6,900 personnel in Bosnia was based on a Joint Staff strategic assessment of the mission to be accomplished, the environment that it was likely to be accomplished in, and the risks to U.S. soldiers and their ability to accomplish their mission.

During the strategic assessment process, according to DOD officials, improvements in Bosnia's political and security environment, particularly in Republika Srpska, led DOD to conclude in January 1998 that existing U.S. force levels in Bosnia could safely be reduced. DOD officials believed that the rise of a relatively moderate Bosnian Serb leadership under Republika Srpska President Plavsic beginning in mid-1997—including the election of

<sup>19</sup>This force was known as "SFOR Phase III" or "Deterrence Force (DFOR)."

<sup>20</sup>Planned rotations that increased U.S. force levels also occurred during prior elections in Bosnia. For example, in October 1997, the number of U.S. Army personnel in Bosnia peaked at 14,400 due to the planned troop rotation around the time of the September 1997 municipal elections

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a relatively moderate Republika Srpska parliament and moderate Prime Minister in November 1997 and mid-January 1998, respectively—and the resulting reduction in power of Bosnian Serb hard-liners had improved conditions such that U.S. forces in Bosnia could safely be drawn down to 6,900 troops.

A December 1997 options document prepared by the Joint Staff, which was the basis for the January 1998 drawdown decision, presented information on the force structure and associated force levels required for a range of potential missions for the SFOR follow-on force. In describing the option that was selected by the National Command Authority, the document indicated that the U.S. military could accomplish the current SFOR mission with two combat battalions in the country rather than its existing three combat battalions, thereby allowing the United States to reduce forces there to 6,900 troops.

In the decision-making process, DOD had considered an operational assessment done by the U.S. European Command<sup>21</sup> in late October 1997. This assessment—based on troop-to-task analyses for various mission options—showed that

(a) if the SFOR follow-on force were to continue SFOR's current mission, the United States would have to maintain its current force levels of about 8,500 troops<sup>22</sup> and its current force structure in Bosnia, particularly its combat capability that included three U.S. combat battalions and two aviation task forces;<sup>23</sup> and

(b) if security conditions in Bosnia substantially improved and SFOR's mission were to be reduced to providing restricted support for civil implementation, the United States could withdraw one of the three U.S. combat battalions from Bosnia and thereby reduce the number of U.S. troops there to 6,900.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Among its other responsibilities, the U.S. European Command directs the development and execution of U.S. military operations in support of the NATO alliance.

<sup>22</sup>The actual number of U.S. troops in Bosnia varied significantly under the first SFOR mission, mainly due to planned troop rotations. As of mid-November 1997, the United States had 8,300 troops in Bosnia.

<sup>23</sup>One aviation task force supported the U.S. military sector only, the other served as SFOR's operational reserve for all of Bosnia.

<sup>24</sup>This force structure was designed for the U.S. contribution to SFOR Phase III or Deterrence Force. NATO in December 1997 decided not to draw down to deterrence force levels.



DOD had also considered SACEUR's military judgment that to do the current SFOR mission with a 6,900 U.S. force level for Bosnia, the United States would have to maintain three combat battalions in the country and relocate some units nearby to Croatia. While this would have shifted some U.S. troops from Bosnia to Croatia, the overall U.S. SFOR force levels in theater would have remained about the same.

After the decision was made, the U.S. military spent February through April 1998 identifying ways of reducing U.S. force levels in Bosnia to 6,900 troops while still maintaining three combat battalions in the country—the option of moving some units to Croatia was no longer being considered. In early March 1998, SACEUR explained to us that three U.S. combat battalions were still needed in Bosnia because (1) although the situation on the ground in Bosnia had changed and the risk had been reduced somewhat, the situation had not altered sufficiently to draw down the number of U.S. combat battalions from three to two;<sup>25</sup> and (2) the Multinational Specialized Unit is not a replacement for SFOR's combat units.

#### NATO Lowered Some Operational Requirements After the U.S. Drawdown Decision

On February 20, 1998, NATO decided that the SFOR follow-on force would continue SFOR's existing mission, and soon after, the U.S. military and NATO began the troop-to-task analysis and force generation process for that force. To reach the 6,900 U.S. force level in Bosnia, DOD determined during this process that the U.S. military would maintain its three combat battalions in the country and instead reduce the number of other combat, combat support, and combat service support units. In planning for the drawdown, DOD expected other countries to contribute resources to make up for some of the U.S. force reductions, but other countries generally did not commit to do so.

Instead, to achieve the reduced troop level objective, the SFOR Commander—a U.S. Army general officer<sup>26</sup>—reassessed the force's operational requirements during March and April 1998 and determined that the force could perform its mission with the lower-than-expected number of resources. This included, for example, consolidating two U.S. aviation task forces<sup>27</sup> and reducing the number of U.S. attack helicopters

<sup>25</sup>According to a special assistant to SACEUR, SACEUR had never concluded that the current SFOR mission could be accomplished with only two U.S. combat battalions in Bosnia.

<sup>26</sup>The SFOR Commander is also the Commanding General of U.S. Army Europe, and Seventh Army, which are part of the U.S. European Command. For purposes of this report, we refer to him only as the "SFOR Commander."

<sup>27</sup>The consolidated task force would serve as both the SFOR operational reserve and the U.S. military sector's aviation support unit.

from 40 to 16. After another NATO country agreed to contribute an additional two attack helicopters, the SFOR Commander determined that the force could accomplish its mission with only 18 attack helicopters in the consolidated task force. In another case, after the U.S. military decided to remove the U.S. target acquisition battery from the Sarajevo airport,<sup>28</sup> the SFOR Commander decided that the battery was not needed given the low artillery threat in the Sarajevo area.<sup>29</sup>

According to DOD officials, NATO finalized the operational requirements for the SFOR follow-on force in late April 1998 and, in late May, officially approved the requirements and decided to draw down SFOR force levels.

As of August 1998, 35 countries had pledged to provide about 33,300 soldiers to the SFOR follow-on force in Bosnia and Croatia, a lower number than the first SFOR mission (see table 2).<sup>30</sup> Almost all of these troops are located in Bosnia. These numbers increased significantly around the time of Bosnia's September 1998 elections and are expected to decrease back to August levels by November 1998. Appendix II provides more detailed information on the number of troops contributed to the SFOR follow-on force.

**Table 2: Troop Contributions to the SFOR Follow-on Force, as of August 1998**

Country	In Bosnia	In Croatia <sup>a</sup>	Total
NATO countries <sup>b</sup>	26,740	848	27,588
Non-NATO countries <sup>c</sup>	4,947	803	5,750
<b>Total</b>	<b>31,687</b>	<b>1,651</b>	<b>33,338</b>

<sup>a</sup>Numbers are not available for 3 of the 12 countries with troops located in Croatia.

<sup>b</sup>Fifteen of 16 NATO countries pledged troops for the SFOR follow-on force.

<sup>c</sup>Twenty non-NATO countries pledged troops for the SFOR follow-on force.

Source: DOD documents.

NATO plans to continue the practice of reviewing SFOR operations at least every 6 months to determine whether changes in conditions in Bosnia

<sup>28</sup>The Sarajevo airport is located in the French military sector.

<sup>29</sup>A target acquisition battery detects and tracks incoming artillery and mortar rounds in order to direct artillery fire back to the source of the incoming rounds. A U.S. target acquisition battery would remain on call in Germany.

<sup>30</sup>Actual SFOR force levels have varied over time. For example, the number of SFOR troops in Bosnia and Croatia increased to about 39,000 from August through October 1997 because of the support provided to OSCE for preparations for, and conduct of, Bosnia's municipal elections held in mid-September. By mid-November 1997, SFOR force levels had declined to about 34,300 troops in Bosnia and 2,500 support troops in Croatia.

would allow changes to SFOR's tasks and force structure. These reviews would permit NATO members, in consultation with other SFOR contributors, to consider possible force reductions, taking into account the level of SFOR support required for military and civil implementation and deterrence requirements. The first 6-month review for the follow-on force would occur sometime before the end of December 1998.

## Multinational Specialized Unit

According to NATO officials and documents, the Multinational Specialized Unit—which has been described as a paramilitary, constabulary, or gendarmerie-type unit—will assist in dealing with civil disturbances associated with the return of refugees and displaced persons and the installation of elected officials. In doing so, the unit will work in close cooperation with international civilian organizations in Bosnia and will not engage in police functions. As of early September 1998, the new unit was significantly short of infantry personnel and air and ground transport assets and unable to become fully operational. According to SACEUR, the unit is an added force rather than a replacement for SFOR's combat battalions and will leave Bosnia before or at the same time as SFOR's combat units.

## Unit Is Underresourced and Not Fully Operational

Under current NATO plans, the Multinational Specialized Unit would consist of 800 soldiers in a brigade headquarters, two infantry battalions, and support and reserve components. As of September 3, 1998, five countries—specifically, Argentina, Italy, Romania, Slovenia, and the United States—had pledged about 500 of the required 800 soldiers. This would provide enough resources for one of the two battalions, a reserve company, a logistics company, and most of the brigade headquarters staff. Italy pledged to provide the bulk of these resources, or about 370 personnel; Argentina made the second largest pledge of about 70 personnel.<sup>31</sup> DOD plans to provide two U.S. military personnel to the brigade headquarters, which will be based in the Sarajevo area.

No countries had agreed to contribute resources to fill NATO operational requirements for the unit's air and ground transport or for most of the second battalion.<sup>32</sup> Because of these shortfalls, only one of the unit's two battalions became operational before Bosnia's September 1998 elections. According to DOD officials, the first battalion became combat ready on August 20, 1998. SACEUR said he had visited the battalion and considers

<sup>31</sup>This represents Argentina's first contribution to a NATO-led force in Bosnia.

<sup>32</sup>Argentina pledged to provide some personnel for the second battalion headquarters, but no country had pledged personnel for the three companies in the second battalion.

them fully operational and most capable. The unit's Italian commander, according to DOD officials, prefers to use the battalion's organic ground transport rather than SFOR air transport that is external to his span of control.

Differing views were expressed about why European countries are reluctant to contribute resources to the Multinational Specialized Unit. Senior international officials in Bosnia told us that European countries with troops in Bosnia believe that they had no operational requirement for such a unit; they believe their soldiers are already trained for and capable of dealing with civil disturbances faced by SFOR.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, SACEUR said that European countries are reluctant to provide resources because they view the unit as an effort by the United States to remove U.S. troops from Bosnia while European troops remained behind. According to a DOD official, the United States has reinforced this belief by contributing only two people to the brigade headquarters, rather than contributing a more significant number such as a company of military police.

As constituted, the new Multinational Specialized Unit is to operate under SFOR control and the same rules of engagement as other SFOR elements. The SFOR Commander will have the authority to control the unit's operations, within the operational parameters specified by each participating country's national command authority.<sup>34</sup> As of late July 1998, questions remained as to where, when, and how the unit would use force in fulfilling its mission and how the unit would coordinate its actions with IPTF and local police authorities.

DOD officials said that the Multinational Specialized Unit should be looked at as a long-term "force multiplier" for SFOR because the unit is providing a new capability, rather than as a near-term unfilled requirement. They believe that the one-battalion-strong unit is quite capable and that the slower-than-expected deployment of the Multinational Specialized Unit will actually benefit, rather than hinder, the unit's ability to conduct

<sup>33</sup>They also told us that (1) the rules of engagement and mission of the unit were unclear; and (2) depending on the unit's mission, the unit could interfere with the efforts of international civilian organizations to restructure Bosnia's police forces in accordance with democratic policing standards.

<sup>34</sup>Since the start of NATO-led operations in Bosnia, national command authority for participating forces has remained with each country. Participating countries have allowed their forces to participate in IFOR and SFOR within specified areas and with specific rules of engagement. The SFOR operation plan of June 1998 contains the most permissive rules of engagement for countries participating in the Multinational Specialized Unit and other SFOR elements; the plan also permits each participating country to issue clarifying instructions that restrict these rules of engagement to ensure compliance with such things as national law. These clarifying instructions must be developed in consultation with the SFOR Commander.

operations. They said that the slower deployment will allow the unit to be built and trained gradually for the mission and will enable better turnover of the unit's forces in the future. According to SACEUR, under current plans the second battalion will come on line during the spring of 1999, as remaining forces are committed for this purpose.

### Unit Will Not Replace SFOR Combat Units

In early February 1998, DOD officials stated that the new specialized unit would eventually replace U.S. and other combat units in Bosnia. They said that the new unit would (1) take over SFOR's "policing" functions and thereby allow SFOR's combat units to withdraw and (2) remain in Bosnia after these units withdraw.

However, by June 1998, this view of the unit's role had changed. According to SACEUR, the Multinational Specialized Unit is not a replacement for SFOR's combat battalions either in the near or long term; it will leave Bosnia before or at the same time as SFOR combat units. SACEUR said that the unit would allow SFOR to facilitate a secure climate of return for refugees and prevent hard-liners in Bosnia from inciting civil disturbances and intimidating returnees. NATO would deploy the unit immediately; the unit's work would be finished when those refugees and displaced persons who want to go home are afforded an opportunity to do so. After the unit departed, NATO and SFOR would then be left with the problem of deterring any resumption of the conflict.

DOD officials later explained that during the debate within NATO over the Multinational Specialized Unit's role in the transition strategy, other NATO members did not accept the U.S. view of the unit's role. Instead, they—and the NATO operation plan for the SFOR follow-on force—agreed with the views articulated by SACEUR.

### Development of NATO's Transition Strategy

As outlined in NATO documents, NATO's strategy for transitioning NATO-led forces out of Bosnia consists of (1) reducing the size, role, and profile of the SFOR follow-on force as conditions in Bosnia improve; and (2) progressively transferring responsibilities to Bosnia's institutions, other civil authorities, the United Nations, the High Representative, OSCE, and other international organizations as appropriate. While NATO has established aims or objectives that are similar to those set by the civilian side of the Bosnia peace operation, NATO has not yet fully developed specific criteria for determining when conditions will have been achieved that would allow SFOR units to draw down or withdraw. According to DOD

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officials, the drawdown criteria are expected to be developed before NATO's next 6-month review of SFOR operations.

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## NATO in Early Stages of Developing Drawdown Criteria

In describing its transition strategy for Bosnia, NATO has continued its effort to delineate conditions that must be met for the desired end-state objective for NATO operations in Bosnia to be realized. (See app. IV for a chronology showing the development of NATO's end-state objective.) These conditions, described as "aims" in the NATO operation plan, are similar to (1) the set of "benchmarks" developed by the executive branch in early 1998 (see app. V) and (2) a set of conditions/goals established by the Peace Implementation Council's Steering Board in early June 1998 (see app. VI).<sup>35</sup> All three sets of aims describe the political, social, economic, and security conditions that the international community hopes to achieve in Bosnia at some undefined point in time.

While NATO has further defined the conditions to be achieved in Bosnia, it has not yet established criteria that would link improvements in specific conditions to a drawdown or withdrawal of NATO forces from Bosnia. In early June 1998, SACEUR said that NATO would develop criteria that would relate troop levels and overall force structure to the accomplishment of or progress toward reaching the U.S. executive branch "benchmarks," that is, conditions that are to be realized in Bosnia. According to SACEUR, in determining when and by how much to draw down forces, NATO will look at such things as the level of cooperation and security conditions in particular geographic areas in Bosnia and the way in which NATO troops contribute to the accomplishment of each one of the executive branch "benchmarks."

According to DOD officials, the operation plan for the SFOR follow-on force directs SFOR to develop drawdown criteria in conjunction with the peace operation's principal civilian organizations. As part of this effort, DOD and NATO are working to prioritize NATO's stated objectives and conditions so that NATO planners can focus on the most important tasks to be accomplished before a troop drawdown and/or eventual withdrawal can begin. According to DOD and State Department officials, some of these conditions do not necessarily have to be completely achieved prior to an SFOR drawdown or withdrawal.

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<sup>35</sup>The Peace Implementation Council Steering Board is an international organization that provides political guidance to the High Representative. The Steering Board directed the High Representative to submit for its consideration a report on progress toward these goals by mid-September 1998.

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In the absence of drawdown criteria, the U.S. military has been reducing its contribution to SFOR due to considerations other than mission requirements and may continue to do so in the future. Many U.S. military officials told us that concern about continued political support for the mission played a large role in the January 1998 decision to drawdown U.S. forces in Bosnia from about 8,500 troops to 6,900. Further, according to U.S. officials at NATO's military headquarters and the U.S. European Command, cost and other factors may drive future decisions regarding the timing of U.S. force reductions. In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD stated that to insinuate that the process was largely the result of "top down" political and cost concerns rather than force appropriate reasons was misleading and inaccurate.

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## Recent Events and SFOR's Next 6-Month Review

Although NATO has not yet finalized its drawdown criteria, DOD, State, and NATO have recognized that the results of the September 1998 elections, along with other changes in Bosnia's political and security conditions, will play a large role in NATO's upcoming decision on whether conditions would allow a further reduction in SFOR force levels. As previously stated, NATO will again consider potential SFOR force reductions sometime before the end of December 1998.

While the overall security situation has improved in Bosnia, political and security conditions remain very volatile and will likely remain so for the foreseeable future.<sup>36</sup> For example, in early September 1998, a senior State Department official told us that after the upcoming elections, returns of refugees and displaced persons across ethnic lines would likely spark violent incidents that require an SFOR response, even with the expectation that relatively moderate Bosnian Serb leaders would be elected. Also, in the recent elections, Republika Srpska voters elected a hard-line Serb nationalist to replace the relatively moderate Plavsic as Republika

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<sup>36</sup>For a description of changes in Bosnia's political and security conditions from mid-1997 to mid-1998, see Bosnia Peace Operation: Pace of Implementing Dayton Accelerated As International Involvement Increased.

Srpska's President.<sup>37</sup> Thus, it may be more difficult than anticipated by DOD and State to implement key civil aspects of Dayton that directly affect Bosnia's security environment—specifically, the return of non-Serb refugees and displaced persons to their prewar homes in Republika Srpska and the integration of non-Serbs into Republika Srpska's police forces.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, as previously discussed, the situation in Kosovo has the potential to inflame nationalist passions in Bosnia and thereby adversely affect the security environment there.

## Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

DOD, State, and the U.S. European Command provided comments on a draft of this report. DOD and State agreed with much of our draft report and said that the decision to draw down U.S. troops in Bosnia was made only for force-appropriate reasons. Both agencies said that any inference that political considerations played a role is incorrect. DOD further said that the U.S. military did conduct detailed troop-to-task/operational and strategic mission analyses and that a thorough, strategically-based examination by the Joint Staff and the U.S. European Command led to the range of proposed options from which the option with the associated force structure was chosen. DOD also indicated that the drawdown decision was largely based on the recommendation of SACEUR, in his capacity as the Commander in Chief, U.S. European Command. Our draft report had discussed the operational and strategic analyses mentioned by DOD, but we modified the report to focus more clearly on the timing of the U.S. and NATO decision-making sequences and the related military assessments.

<sup>37</sup>Nikola Poplasen—the newly-elected President of Republika Srpska, President of the Serb Radical Party of Bosnia, and a paramilitary commander during the war—ran as a candidate for Serb Radicals and another hard-line nationalist party, the Serb Democratic Party (SDS). According to OHR and OSCE documents, the Serb Radical Party of Bosnia has also publicly linked itself with the Serb Radical Party of Serbia—led by Serbia's Deputy Prime Minister and former paramilitary commander Vojislav Seselj—to the cause of uniting into one nation Serb people from Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, and Republika Srpska, thereby challenging Bosnia's territorial integrity and violating the Dayton Agreement. Immediately after the election, the Serb Radical Party encouraged its supporters to intimidate and harass OSCE and other international organizations and incited its supporters to demonstrate by creating rumors that OSCE would remove Poplasen as a candidate for violating election rules. On September 21, 1998, OSCE ruled that the Serb Radical Party had violated numerous election rules and removed nine candidates from the party's candidate lists for Bosnia's Parliamentary Assembly and Republika Srpska's National Assembly, but did not remove Poplasen as a candidate. The High Representative has the authority to remove from office any elected official in Bosnia who obstructs Dayton implementation.

<sup>38</sup>We note that almost no progress had been made in these two areas as of late September 1998, even after the installation of the relatively moderate Republika Srpska government in January 1998. In June 1998 we reported that although the moderate Republika Srpska Prime Minister, Milorad Dodik, had expressed full support for Dayton implementation, he had appointed Ministers of Justice, Interior, and Defense who had either expressed limited support for Dayton implementation or were closely associated with hard-line nationalists and people indicted for war crimes; thus, these people may continue to obstruct efforts to implement Dayton.



DOD was also concerned about what it said was our negative portrayal of the manning and readiness of the Multinational Specialized Unit. We believe that our report accurately depicted the status of the unit's manning and readiness. However, we have added to the report information on DOD's views regarding the Multinational Specialized Unit. DOD's written comments and our response to them are included in appendix VII.

The Department of State found the draft report to be good overall, but it observed that SFOR's support for the civil aspects of Dayton needed to be considered in the larger context that would include international civilian efforts—particularly with regard to surrendering indictees to the international war crimes tribunal—as civilian and military efforts to implement Dayton had been closely coordinated since mid-1997. We have expanded our discussion of this matter, noting that prior GAO reports on the Bosnia peace operation discuss in great detail the larger context of international efforts in Bosnia.<sup>39</sup> State's written comments and our response to them are included in appendix VIII.

The U.S. European Command concurred with DOD's response to the draft report and commented on additional issues. The command said that (1) we should not use of the term "expanded scope" when referring to SFOR military operations; (2) our description of the timing of U.S. troop reductions was incomplete; (3) one battalion of the Multinational Specialized Unit was fully operational; and (4) our report created an impression that NATO allies are not fully supportive of force requirements for the SFOR mission. We believe our report accurately depicted the situation in each of these four areas, but we have modified the report to add the command's views on these matters. The command's written comments and our response to them are included in appendix IX.

## Scope and Methodology

To assess how the scope of the NATO-led military force's operations in Bosnia has changed since mid-1997, we made visits to Bosnia in June and October 1997 and February 1998. During these visits, we did audit work in numerous locations throughout Bosnia and interviewed officials from the headquarters of SFOR and two of its multinational divisions; OHR; the U.N. Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including IPTF, U.N. Civil Affairs, and the Mine Action Center; UNHCR; and OSCE; as well as Bosnian displaced persons, many of whom had returned to their homes in areas controlled by another ethnic group. We also visited NATO headquarters and the U.S.

<sup>39</sup>See *Bosnia Peace Operation: Pace of Implementing Dayton Accelerated as International Involvement Increased* and *Bosnia Peace Operation: Progress Toward Achieving the Dayton Agreement's Goals*.

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mission to NATO in Brussels, Belgium, during September 1997 and February 1998 and obtained information from U.S. and NATO officials at these locations. Further, we analyzed numerous situation reports and other documents from U.S. agencies, NATO, SFOR, OHR, OSCE, IPTF, UNHCR, and other organizations.

To assess (1) the mission, force structure, and force levels of the recently approved, NATO-led military force in Bosnia and (2) NATO's strategy for transitioning NATO-led forces out of Bosnia, we obtained information from U.S. and NATO officials at NATO headquarters and the U.S. mission to NATO; SFOR headquarters in Sarajevo, Bosnia; DOD, the State Department, and the Central Intelligence Agency in Washington, D.C.; and the U.S. European Command and U.S. Army Europe in Germany. We also analyzed State, DOD, U.S. European Command, NATO, and OHR documents pertaining to these issues.

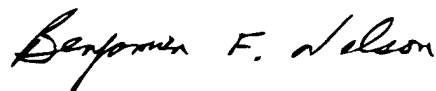
We conducted our audit work from June 1997 through October 1998 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

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We are sending copies of this report to the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Commander in Chief, U.S. European Command, and other appropriate congressional committees. Copies will also be made available to other interested parties upon request.

This report was prepared under the direction of Harold J. Johnson, Associate Director, International Relations and Trade Issues, who may be contacted on (202) 512-4128 if you or your staff have any questions about this report. Other major contributors to the report include David Bruno, B. Patrick Hickey, and Judith McCloskey.

Sincerely yours,



Benjamin F. Nelson, Director  
International Relations and Trade Issues

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## Abbreviations

DOD	Department of Defense
IFOR	Implementation Force
IPTF	International Police Task Force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OHR	Office of the High Representative
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SFOR	Stabilization Force
UNHCR	U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMIBH	U.N. Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina



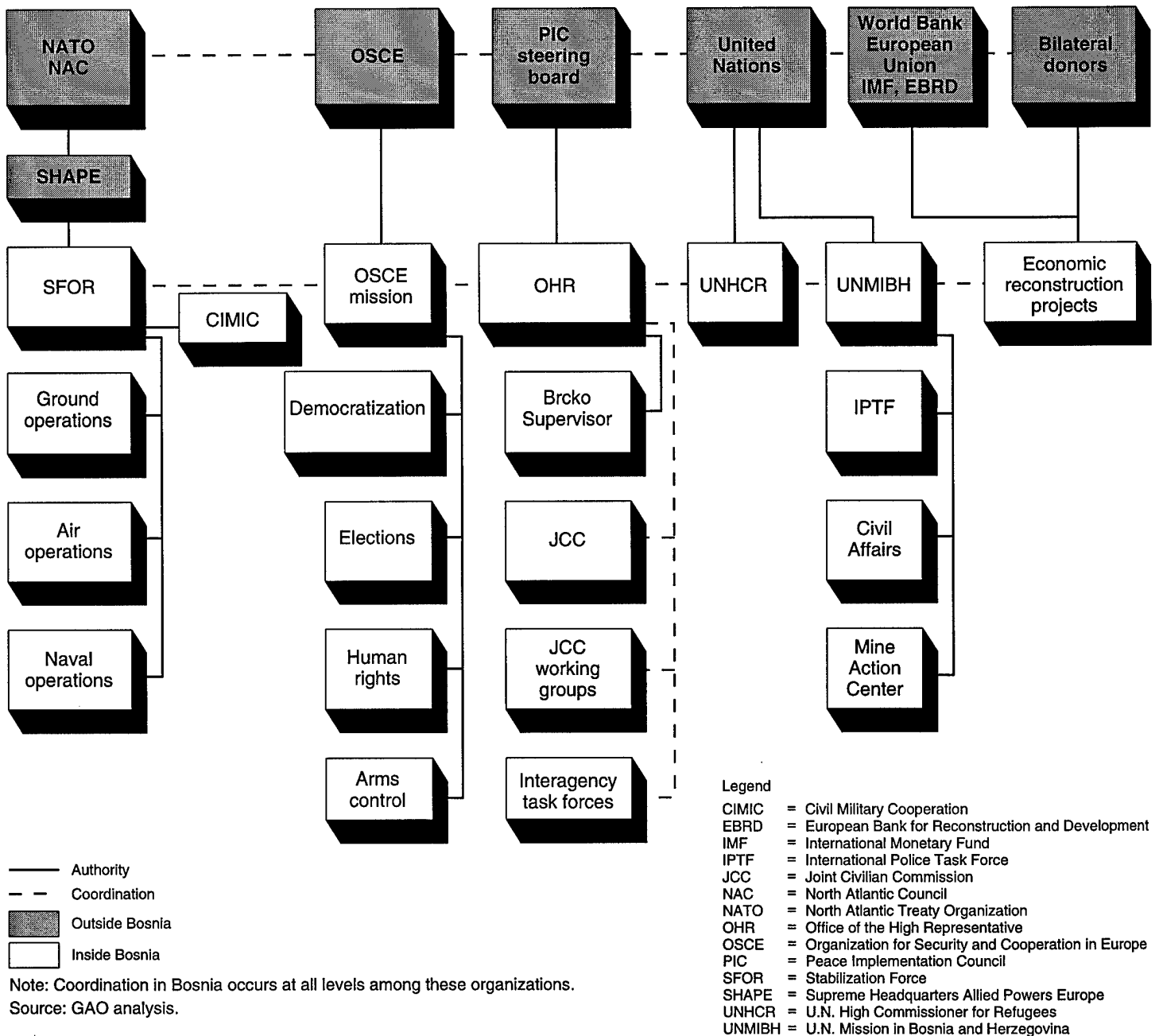
# Background

Implementing the Dayton Agreement is a complex, decentralized peace operation designed to help Bosnia's political leaders achieve the commitments they had made in signing the agreement. These commitments include providing a secure environment for the people of Bosnia; developing the institutions and practices of a unified, multiethnic, and democratic country that respects the rule of law; surrendering people indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia to the tribunal; ensuring the right of refugees and displaced persons to return to their prewar homes; and rebuilding the economy.

To assist the parties in their efforts, the international community established military and civilian components of the Bosnia peace operation. The peace operation consists of five principal organizations—a multinational military force led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and four international civilian organizations. It also includes numerous countries and international organizations that have donated economic and other assistance to aid in Bosnia's reconstruction and recovery since late 1995.<sup>1</sup> Figure I.1 shows how the operation was organized as of December 1997.

<sup>1</sup>In the first year of Bosnia's Priority Reconstruction Program, 59 donors—48 countries and 11 organizations—pledged \$1.9 billion for Bosnia's economic reconstruction. In the program's second year, the pace of donor contributions slowed somewhat as 31 of the program's original donors pledged an additional \$1.2 billion. In 1998, 26 countries and 4 international organizations pledged an additional \$1.25 billion for the program, bringing the total amount pledged for Bosnia's economic reconstruction to \$4.35 billion since late 1995.

Figure I.1: Organization of the Bosnia Peace Operation, as of December 1997





The peace operation's military component consists of a NATO-led military force. The North Atlantic Council, the political leadership of NATO, authorized a military force, known as the Implementation Force (IFOR), for a 1-year mission that began on December 20, 1995. Recognizing the need for a continued NATO force in Bosnia, the North Atlantic Council in December 1996 authorized SFOR for an 18-month period that ended on June 20, 1998. The mandate of IFOR and later SFOR was to (1) monitor and enforce the military aspects of the agreement, including the separation and cantonment of the Bosniak, Bosnian Croat, and Bosnian Serb militaries in Bosnia;<sup>2</sup> and (2) support the operation's civilian organizations in accomplishing their missions, when requested and if resources allowed.

The civilian component of the peace operation contained many organizations. OHR was established by the Dayton Agreement to assist the parties in implementing the civil aspects of the agreement and to coordinate the operation's civilian organization. Other organizations participating in the operation include UNMIBH, with its unarmed, civilian police monitoring operation—IPTF—and other components; OSCE, which was to administer many aspects of and supervise countrywide elections, monitor arms control measures, and monitor and report on human rights; and UNHCR, which was responsible for developing a plan for and fostering the phased, orderly return of Bosnia's refugees and displaced persons, of whom about 1.3 million have not returned home.

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<sup>2</sup>IFOR, and later SFOR, had the authority to use force to ensure implementation of annex 1A of the Dayton Agreement and the protection of IFOR. The U.N. Security Council provided IFOR's authority to use force in resolution 1031 on December 15, 1995, and provided SFOR's authority in resolution 1088 on December 12, 1996.

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# SFOR Troop Contributions and Organization

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This appendix provides information on troop contributions to SFOR by NATO and non-NATO countries (see table II.1) and organizational charts for SFOR's three multinational divisions in Bosnia, as well as the support command in Croatia (see figs. II.1 through II.4). The three divisions are led by the United States, France, and the United Kingdom and operate in three separate military sectors.

**Appendix II**  
**SFOR Troop Contributions and Organization**

**Table II.1: Troop Contributions to the SFOR Follow-on Force, by Country, as of August 1998**

<b>Country</b>	<b>In Bosnia</b>	<b>In Croatia</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>NATO</b>			
Belgium	800	50	<b>850</b>
Canada	1,250		<b>1,250</b>
Denmark	747		<b>747</b>
France	2,500	<sup>a</sup>	<b>2,500</b>
Germany	2,470	<sup>a</sup>	<b>2,470</b>
Greece	280	280	
Italy <sup>b</sup>	1,970		<b>1,970</b>
Luxembourg	18	18	<b>36</b>
Netherlands	1,080		<b>1,080</b>
Norway	615		<b>615</b>
Portugal	320		<b>320</b>
Spain	1,550		<b>1,550</b>
Turkey	1,520		<b>1,520</b>
United Kingdom	5,000	<sup>a</sup>	<b>5,000</b>
United States <sup>b, c</sup>	6,900	500 <sup>d</sup>	<b>7,400</b>
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>26,740</b>	<b>848</b>	<b>27,588</b>

(continued)

**Appendix II**  
**SFOR Troop Contributions and Organization**

<b>Country</b>	<b>In Bosnia</b>	<b>In Croatia</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Non-NATO</b>			
Albania <sup>e</sup>	35		<b>35</b>
Argentina <sup>b</sup>	68		<b>68</b>
Austria	230	230	
Bulgaria	30	28	<b>58</b>
Czech Republic	640		<b>640</b>
Egypt	270		<b>270</b>
Estonia	41		<b>41</b>
Finland	341		<b>341</b>
Hungary	310	310	
Ireland	50		<b>50</b>
Jordan	10		<b>10</b>
Latvia	39		<b>39</b>
Lithuania	40		<b>40</b>
Morocco	650		<b>650</b>
Poland	400		<b>400</b>
Russia	1,400		<b>1,400</b>
Romania <sup>b</sup>	21	200	<b>221</b>
Slovenia <sup>b</sup>	22	35	<b>57</b>
Sweden	510		<b>510</b>
Ukraine <sup>f</sup>	380		<b>380</b>
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>4,947</b>	<b>803</b>	<b>5,750</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>31,687</b>	<b>1,651</b>	<b>33,338</b>

<sup>a</sup>Number of troops deployed in Croatia is not available.

<sup>b</sup>Includes the country's contribution to SFOR's new Multinational Specialized Unit.

<sup>c</sup>The United States has deployed about 2,600 additional non-SFOR troops in Hungary and Italy in support of U.S. SFOR troops.

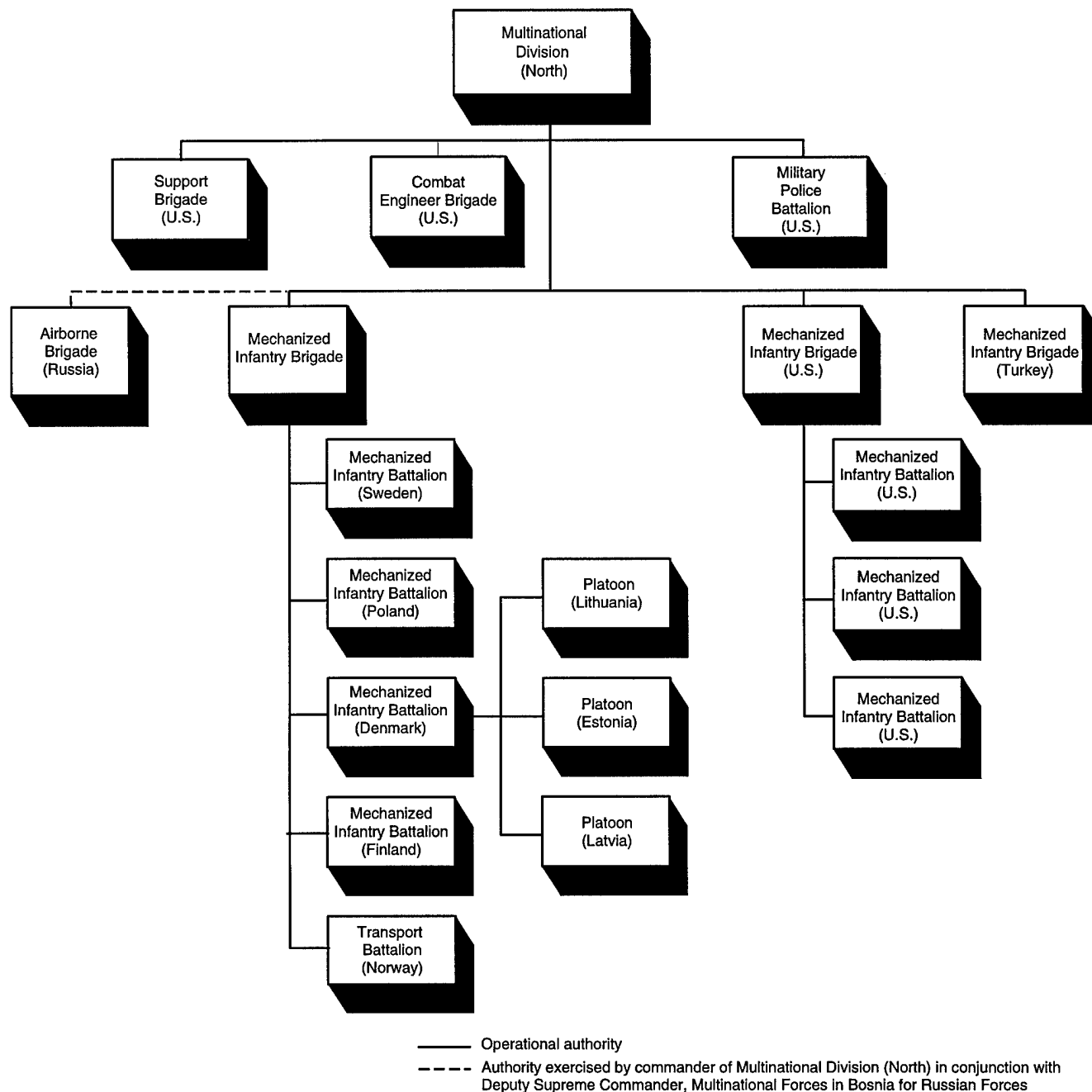
<sup>d</sup>Includes some non-SFOR troops supporting the SFOR operation.

<sup>e</sup>As of September 1998.

<sup>f</sup>Scheduled to increase the contribution during the summer and autumn of 1998.

Appendix II  
SFOR Troop Contributions and Organization

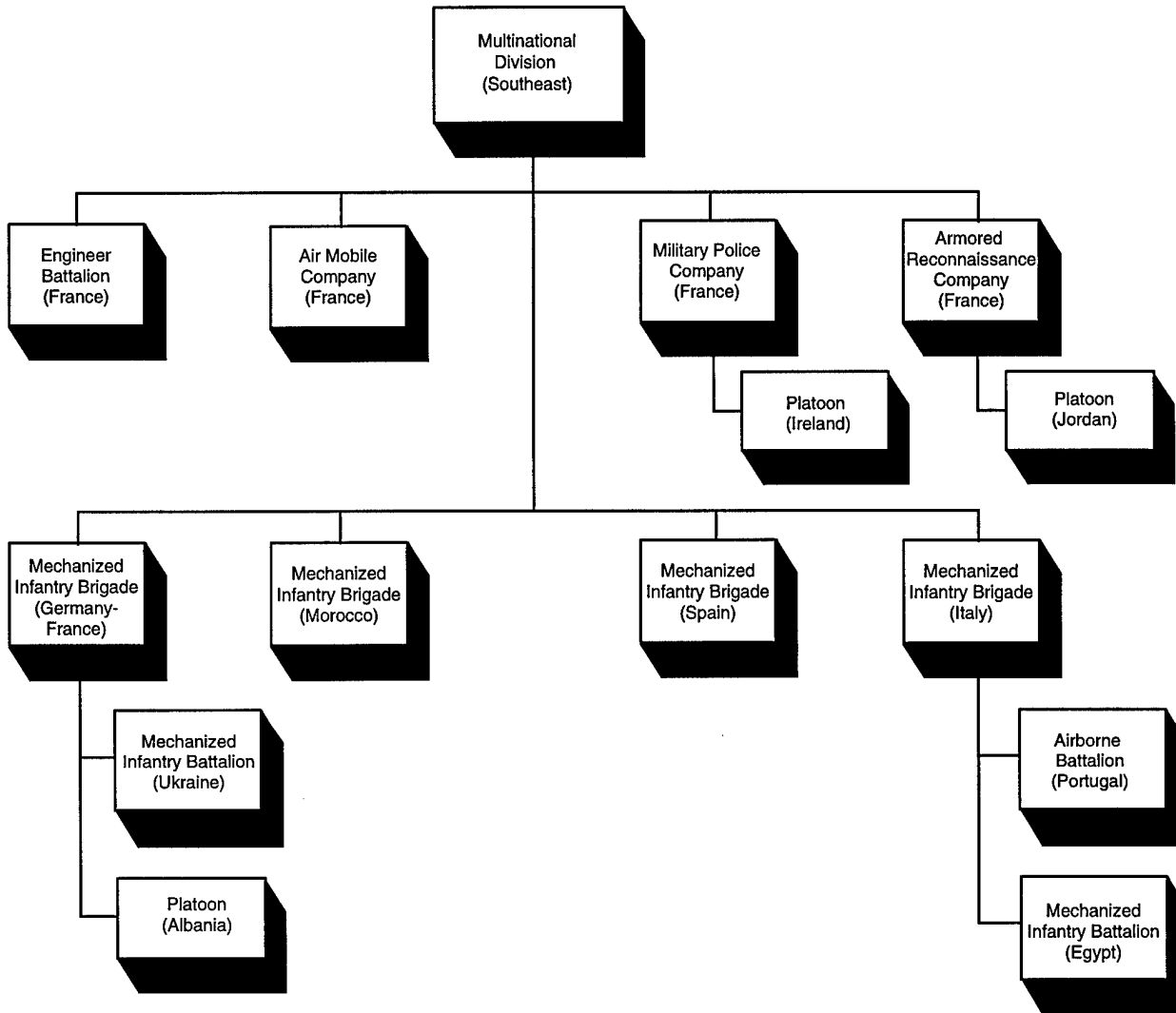
Figure II.1: Organization of the U.S. Military Sector



Note: SFOR's consolidated aviation task force also provides sector support for Multinational Division (North).

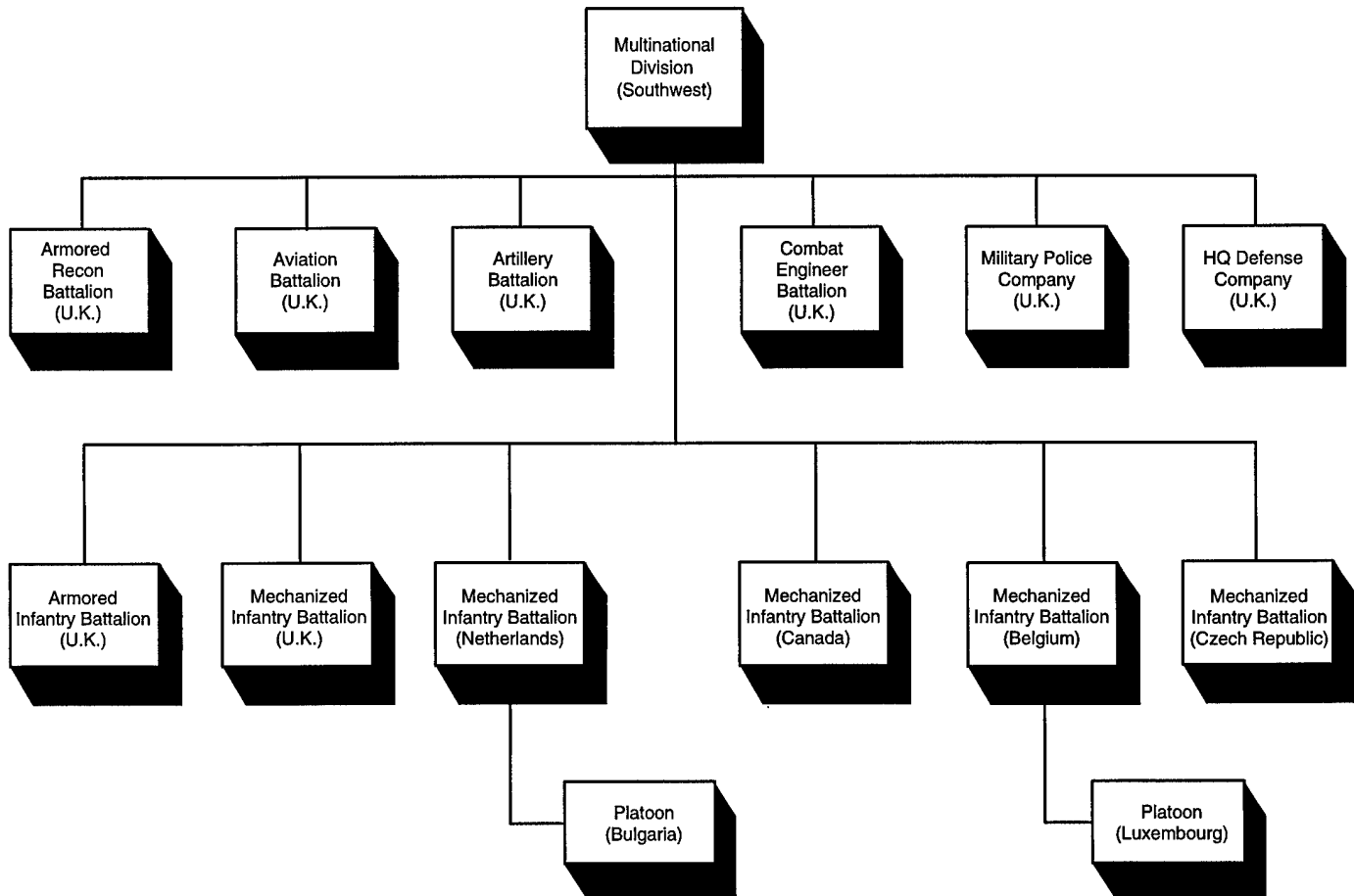
Appendix II  
SFOR Troop Contributions and Organization

Figure II.2: Organization of the French Military Sector



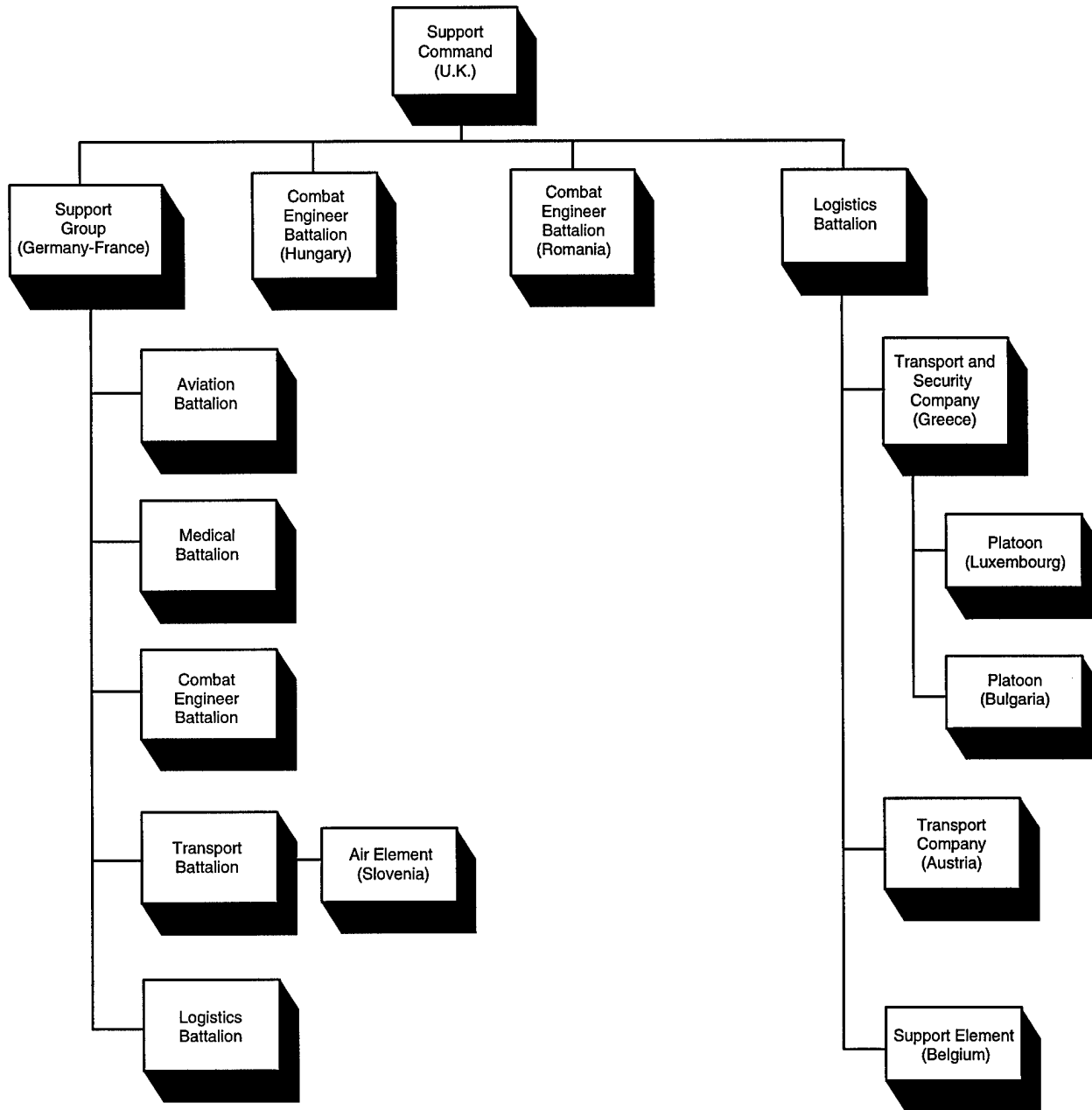
Appendix II  
SFOR Troop Contributions and Organization

Figure II.3: Organization of the British Military Sector



Appendix II  
SFOR Troop Contributions and Organization

Figure II.4: Organization of the SFOR Support Command in Croatia



Note: U.S. SFOR troops in Croatia serve in the SFOR support command and at the SFOR headquarters in Zagreb.



# U.S. Force Reductions in Bosnia

This appendix provides information on the drawdown of U.S. forces in Bosnia from about 8,500 personnel to about 6,900 personnel. In planning for the drawdown, the Department of Defense (DOD) expected other countries to contribute additional assets to make up for some of the U.S. force reductions; however, as shown in table III.1, other countries generally did not commit to do so. According to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), the “expected contributions” were SFOR hopes—nothing more—as the countries never were committed to numbers listed in the table below. DOD officials also said that there was never any specific commitment by any country to provide additional forces; rather, there was just a general sense that the allies might be prepared to meet unfilled U.S. requirements.

In most cases, NATO reassessed its operational requirements during March and April 1998 and determined that SFOR could accomplish its mission with the reduced force levels that would result from the U.S. drawdown. The United States, however, will provide 32 more civil affairs personnel than it had originally planned to make up some of the shortfall in this category. Also, a U.S. target acquisition battery will remain on call in Germany.

**Appendix III  
U.S. Force Reductions in Bosnia**

**Table III.1: Other Countries' Responses to Reductions in U.S. Military Assets in Bosnia**

<b>U.S. military assets</b>	<b>U.S. reductions</b>	<b>Expected contributions from other countries</b>	<b>Actual pledges from other countries</b>
Two aviation task forces <sup>a</sup>	Consolidated two task forces into one by August 1998; new task force given dual-hatted mission of sector support and theater operational reserve.		
	Attack helicopters reduced from 40 to 16.	A company of 10-12 attack helicopters was expected to be provided by another NATO country (for a total of 26-28 attack helicopters in the consolidated task force).	2 attack helicopters were pledged by the Netherlands (for a total of 18 attack helicopters in the consolidated task force).
	Medium lift helicopters reduced from 25 to 15.	None expected.	Not applicable.
	The reduction in helicopters reduced the number of U.S. troops in Bosnia by about 590.		
Target acquisition battery <sup>b</sup>	This low-density, high-usage asset is to be removed from Sarajevo airport, located in the French military sector, for a reduction of 30 U.S. troops in Bosnia.	Another NATO country was expected to provide this resource.	None provided.
Civil affairs and psychological operations personnel	Number of these personnel in U.S. military sector reduced significantly, with psychological operations personnel reduced to one-third of previous numbers.	Unnamed countries were expected to provide replacement civil affairs personnel.	None provided.
		No replacements expected for psychological operations personnel.	Not applicable.
Artillery and fire support <sup>c</sup>	Reduced by 70 percent, for a reduction of at least 400 U.S. troops in Bosnia.	Unnamed countries were expected to provide resources for some fire support and field artillery units.	None provided.
		The U.S. European Command determined that other artillery support <sup>c</sup> could be removed from Bosnia at a very low level of risk.	Not applicable.

<sup>a</sup>One of these task forces supported the U.S. military sector in Bosnia, and the other served as the SFOR operational reserve that covered all of Bosnia.

<sup>b</sup>The target acquisition battery at the Sarajevo airport consisted of one Q-36 radar and support equipment with a crew of about 30 personnel. A target acquisition battery detects and tracks incoming artillery and mortar rounds in order to direct artillery fire back to the source of the incoming rounds.

<sup>c</sup>The United States provided the bulk of this support to the Nordic-Polish brigade as a condition of the brigade's operations in Bosnia.

# Development of NATO's End-State Objective for Bosnia

This appendix provides a chronology showing the development of NATO's end-state objective for its operations in Bosnia from December 1995 through December 1996.

## IFOR Established in December 1995 With No End-State Objective

In December 1995, as directed by the North Atlantic Council, the operation plan for the first NATO-led mission in Bosnia, IFOR, was approved with an end date rather than an end-state objective.<sup>1</sup> In the absence of a defined end state, IFOR's objectives were to complete the military tasks specified in the Dayton Agreement, to support the operation's civilian organizations when requested and if resources allowed, and to withdraw from Bosnia by December 1996.

## End-State Objective Approved in December 1996

The North Atlantic Council approved an end-state objective when it established the second NATO-led mission in Bosnia—SFOR—in December 1996. According to the SFOR operation plan, the desired NATO end state is an environment adequately secure for the "continued consolidation of the peace" without further need for NATO-led military forces in Bosnia. The plan lists four conditions that must be met for the desired end-state objective to be realized:

- The political leaders of Bosnia's three ethnic groups must demonstrate a commitment to continue negotiations as the means to resolve political and military differences;
- Bosnia's established civil structures must be sufficiently mature to assume responsibilities for ensuring compliance with the Dayton Agreement;
- The political leaders of Bosnia's three ethnic groups must adhere on a sustained basis to the military requirements of the Dayton Agreement, including the virtual absence of violations or unauthorized military activities; and
- Conditions must be established for the safe continuation of ongoing, nation-building activities.

In defining these conditions, NATO recognized that the ability of NATO forces to withdraw without the conflict resuming is closely linked to the achievement of the Bosnia peace operation's civilian goals.

Although the SFOR operation plan defined an end-state objective, it also asserted that these conditions would be achieved within 18 months, by

<sup>1</sup>The Dayton Agreement provided little guidance about what would constitute a desired end state for NATO operations in Bosnia. The agreement sought to establish "lasting security" based on a "durable cessation of hostilities" but did not further define these terms.

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**Appendix IV**  
**Development of NATO's End-State**  
**Objective for Bosnia**

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June 1998. The plan did not, however, provide information on how the civil-related conditions were to be achieved or what criteria NATO would use to determine when the desired end state had been realized. Instead, the plan based the 18-month time frame on the assumption that the international community would develop a political framework and civil implementation strategy for 1997 and 1998 that would increase the emphasis on efforts of the operation's civilian organizations and Bosnia's political leaders to consolidate the peace.

# Executive Branch Objectives and Conditions for Creating an Irreversible Peace Process in Bosnia

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This appendix provides the key objectives and conditions (what the executive branch refers to as “benchmarks”) that the executive branch believes must be achieved if the peace process is to become irreversible (see table IV.1). The objectives and conditions cover 10 different areas, most of which are related to the civil aspects of the Dayton Agreement.

The linkage between the executive branch “benchmarks” and a drawdown of NATO-led forces in Bosnia is unclear. In early June 1998, a senior State Department official said that NATO-led forces may be able to drawdown and withdraw once a “critical mass” of progress toward some or all of these “benchmarks” has been achieved. This official did not further define the term “critical mass.” In a letter to Congress dated July 28, 1998, the President said that the 10 conditions represent the point at which Dayton implementation can continue without the support of a major NATO-led military force. The letter did not define what constitutes a major NATO-led military force.

**Appendix V  
Executive Branch Objectives and  
Conditions for Creating an Irreversible  
Peace Process in Bosnia**

**Table V.1: U.S. Executive Branch Objectives and Conditions for Ensuring a Self-Sustaining Peace Process**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Conditions to be realized</b>
Military stability	Ensure absence of conflict; support continued military balance.	Cease-fire maintained.
	Establish basis for interentity cooperation.	Weapons remain in storage, and arms limits not exceeded.
	Prevent return of extremist influence.	Special police disbanded or restructured.
		Interentity arms control and confidence-building measures adopted.
		Covert external support for entity armies terminated.
Police and judicial reform		Federation train and equip program <sup>a</sup> completed; traditional support and sustainment arrangement with Federation Army in place.
	Restructure, equip, and train police in accordance with democratic standards.	All local police forces restructured and ethnically integrated, equipping underway.
	Separate police forces from party/ethnic control.	Basic skill and human rights training completed.
	Reform and integrate judicial sector.	Police deal effectively with civil disturbances and disorder.
		Police academies functioning; leadership professionalized.
Operationalize Bosnia's institutions		Intelligence services/secret police stripped of police function.
		Effective judicial reform program in place.
	Entity/national institutions functioning and taking increased control of functions now under international authority.	Outlawed pre-Dayton institutions dissolved.
	Empower legitimate institutional control over revenue collection and disbursement.	Functioning customs services and control over revenues established.
	Dismantle corrupt, nongovernmental entities/institutions.	Transparency established in budgets and disbursements.
	Curb official corruption.	Funds flowing to Bosnia's national institutions; permanent staff and facilities in place.

(continued)

**Appendix V  
Executive Branch Objectives and  
Conditions for Creating an Irreversible  
Peace Process in Bosnia**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Conditions to be realized</b>
Media reform	<p>Divest political parties of control over media.</p> <p>Access to media for all political parties.</p> <p>Foster growth of independent media.</p>	<p>Political parties divested of control of broadcast networks.</p> <p>Entity- and national-level policy and regulatory structures in place.</p> <p>Opposition party access to airwaves for future elections guaranteed under new election law.</p> <p>Alternative and/or independent media generally available throughout Bosnia.</p>
Electoral process and democratization	<p>Election results implemented.</p> <p>Influence of extremists reduced as moderates gain control.</p> <p>Elections are conducted in a free and fair manner.</p>	<p>Local, entity, and national governments beginning to function transparently.</p> <p>Parties accept binding arbitration for implementation of results in contested local elections.</p> <p>Electoral laws modified to meet international/OSCE standards.</p> <p>September 1998 elections conducted in free and fair manner.</p> <p>Need for OSCE supervision reduced.</p>
Economic reconstruction and recovery	<p>Republika Srpska economy improving, Federation economy continues to improve.</p> <p>Foster interentity trade, commercial links, and inter-dependence.</p> <p>Free market economic reforms in place.</p> <p>Improve investment climate.</p>	<p>Interim currency circulating freely, being used for official transactions.</p> <p>Agreement reached on permanent currency.</p> <p>Public corporations formed; privatization laws in line with Dayton.</p> <p>Transparent budgets in place; government control established over sources of revenue.</p> <p>Major infrastructure (i.e., transportation, power, telecoms) repaired and functioning.</p> <p>Businesses and industry are opening, expanding.</p> <p>International Monetary Fund program in place, traditional lending programs begun.</p>

(continued)

**Appendix V  
Executive Branch Objectives and  
Conditions for Creating an Irreversible  
Peace Process in Bosnia**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Conditions to be realized</b>
Refugee returns	A credible minority return process is functioning.  Process for regional returns underway.	Entity property laws comply with Dayton.  Property Commission fully functioning.  Entity governments permit or participate in phased, orderly, cross-ethnic returns.  Key cities have accepted substantial returns (Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Mostar).  Local police protect returnees of all ethnic groups.
Brcko	Arbitral award implemented without violence.  Secure environment for returns established.  Ethnic integration continues; multiethnic administration functioning.	Local elections implemented.  Integrated police functioning.  Two-way returns progressing.  Ethnic reintegration of Brcko continues.  Economic investment, job creation underway.
War crimes	Parties to the Dayton Agreement cooperate with the international war crimes tribunal in arresting and prosecuting indictees.  Significant number of top indictees at the Hague.	Control of political, military, and media sectors by war criminals terminated.  Indictees' access to economic resources terminated.  Entity justice sectors cooperating with the war crimes tribunal.  Local authorities facilitate the apprehension of indictees.
International organizations	International organizations and agencies effectively carry out implementation efforts without military support.	Local authorities and/or entity armies capable of assuming responsibility for demining operations.  OHR demonstrates authority to encourage and enforce interentity agreements without military backup.  OSCE, NATO, and the European Union develop more traditional relationships with Bosnia.

<sup>a</sup>The Federation train and equip program is a U.S.-led international effort to provide training and equipment for the Bosniak and Bosnian Croat militaries as they integrate into a unified Federation military.



# Peace Implementation Council's Set of Conditions for a Self-Sustaining Peace in Bosnia

In a declaration dated June 9, 1998, the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council—the body that provides political guidance to the High Representative—established a set of 11 conditions that must be realized for a self-sustaining peace to take hold in Bosnia. The Steering Board did not attempt to link improvements in conditions to a drawdown or withdrawal of NATO-led forces from Bosnia, nor did it establish specific criteria for measuring progress in the 11 areas. The declaration stated the following:

“The Steering Board underscores that conditions must be established in order for Bosnia and Herzegovina to become a modern country with the key elements of democratic institutions in place and the basic factors of ethnic confrontation removed: that requires a self-sustaining peace. The Steering Board asks the High Representative to submit for its consideration a report on the state of peace implementation in Bosnia and Herzegovina by mid-September [1998]. The report should focus on progress in relation to, inter alia, the following goals in the main areas:

- “A significant mass of returns reached and the phased, orderly, peaceful return of refugees and displaced persons on a self-sustaining basis in significant numbers.
- A self-sustaining and continuing cease-fire supported by transparent mechanisms for military to military cooperation.
- A core of basic legislation that imposes the rule of law and the establishment of an independent judiciary.
- Consolidation of free-market reforms, including a transparent privatisation that precludes political influence on the key economic sectors, and maintenance of an IMF [International Monetary Fund] program and effective free movement of goods, services and capital within Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- The restructuring, re-integration, retraining and equipping of police in both Entities [the Federation and Republika Srpska] in accordance with democratic and professional standards.
- The dissolution of illegal pre-Dayton institutions, with revenue and disbursement mechanisms brought under the control of legitimate authorities.
- The regulation of media in accordance with democratic standards and the availability of free and independent media throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- The regular conduct of elections and implementation of election results in accordance with democratic standards.

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**Appendix VI  
Peace Implementation Council's Set of  
Conditions for a Self-Sustaining Peace in  
Bosnia**

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- Cooperation by the Parties to the Peace Agreement with the ICTY [international war crimes tribunal] in the arrest and prosecution of war criminals.
- The consolidation of multi-ethnic institutions and of a secure environment for returns in Brcko.
- Full cooperation in peace implementation by neighbouring countries."

# Comments From the Department of Defense

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.



POLICY

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
2000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-2000



3 Sep 1998

Mr. Benjamin F. Nelson  
Director, International Relations and Trade Issues  
National Security and International Affairs Division  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Nelson

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the General Accounting Office (GAO) draft report, "BOSNIA PEACE OPERATION: Mission, Structure, and Transition Strategy of NATO's Stabilization Force," dated August 17, 1998 (GAO Code 711361), OSD Case 1677. The Department agrees with much of the report, particularly its discussions regarding the current status of the military and civilian missions supported by SFOR. In addition, the factual content is for the most part accurate and thorough.

However, we have two areas of concern: first, the negative portrayal of the impact of manning and readiness on the Multinational Specialized Unit's (MSU) integration into SFOR; and, second, the implication that the decision to draw down U.S. troops was for political rather than force-appropriate reasons.

First, the MSU and the value it adds to SFOR. The report states that, "...the new unit was significantly short of infantry personnel and air and ground transport assets and unable to become fully operational." It goes on to say, "No countries had agreed to contribute resources to fill NATO operational requirements for the unit's air and ground transport or for most of the second battalion." Despite the current absence of a second battalion (planned), the now operational, 500-strong first battalion provides an all-new specialized SFOR capability to deal with civil disturbance. The simple fact that the unit is being deployed one battalion at a time should not be viewed as evidence of failure of the program, or that it is not "fully operational." The battalion is quite capable, and recently highlighted its capabilities to the public in a special demonstration. There are still plans to deploy the second battalion once sufficient troop strength and billeting arrangements have been made. Regarding transportation, the current situation in which the Italian commander has an organic transportation capability is not merely "sufficient" as the report suggests; rather, he prefers it to a reliance on SFOR transportation assets external to his span of control. The statement, "In early February 1998, DoD officials stated that the new specialized unit will eventually replace U.S. and other combat units in Bosnia," describes a view considered early on in the planning of the MSU, but since revised. The MSU provides its capability as an additive rather than a replacement for SFOR units by bridging the gap in capability between the police-mentoring International Police Task Force and the combat military SFOR.




See comment 1.

See comment 2.

Second, the report's contention that the decision to draw US troop strength down to levels around 6900 was "due to cost and other considerations," and its citation of "military officials" as believing that the decision was based on "other factors, such as concern about continued political support for the mission." The report also states that SFOR's detailed troop-to-task analysis did not take place until after the decision to draw down. This statement reflects a basic misunderstanding of the difference between U.S. and NATO military planning processes. Formal SFOR troop-to-task analysis in official NATO channels may or may not have begun prior to the 28 January 1998 USG decision to contribute 6,900 troops. Prior to NATO's draw down decision being made, the U.S. military (vice NATO/SFOR) did conduct detailed operational and strategic mission analyses of requirements for a continued SFOR, considering both U.S. and overall force levels. A thorough, strategically-based examination by the Joint Staff/J5 and European Command (EUCOM) led to the range of proposed options from which was chosen the option the U.S. would support and the associated force structure. The key factors considered during the process were the force's ability to successfully complete the mission, the environment in which the force would be operating, and most importantly, the risk factors directly affecting force protection and mission accomplishment. While it is true that an October 1997 military assessment raised serious questions about whether the current SFOR mission could be accomplished at the 6,900 U.S. force level, the final recommendation by the Commander in Chief, U.S. European Command (CINCEUR) was based on revised commander's assessments that concluded that a contribution of 6,900 to post-SFOR was sufficient for U.S. forces to accomplish their mission and to adequately protect themselves in the expected post-SFOR environment. Similarly, CINCEUR's concern for the need to relocate troops to Croatia was revised with the assessment that the capabilities provided by those units were no longer needed. On the broader question of the rationale for modestly reducing the size of the U.S. contribution to the overall NATO force, a troop-strength reduction was a natural evolution of a two-and-a-half year operation in which experience and an improved—though by no means perfect—security and political context on the ground allowed the mission to be executed with somewhat smaller forces (recall that IFOR was nearly 82% bigger than SFOR). A range of options (with U.S. troop strengths ranging from 4,500 to 8,500 and corresponding variance in the size of the overall NATO force) was presented for National Command Authority decision accompanied by an analysis by the American commanders of the capabilities, costs, risks, and pros and cons of each. It is true that the final decision was a political one in the sense that it was made by the elected civilian leadership—the President—on the advice of his civilian and military advisors, as is the nature of all major policy decisions, but to insinuate that the process was largely the result of "top-down" political and cost concerns is misleading and inaccurate.

Suggested technical changes for clarification and accuracy have been provided separately. The Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft report.

Sincerely,

  
BERND McCONNELL  
Director, Bosnia Task Force

The following are GAO's comments on the Department of Defense's letter dated September 3, 1998.

## GAO Comments

1. Our report reflects DOD's views that the new Multinational Specialized Unit represents an additive capability rather than a replacement for SFOR units. We have added information to convey DOD's views that (a) the one-battalion-strong unit is already quite capable and (b) the unit's Italian commander prefers to use the battalion's organic ground transport rather than air transport that is external to his control.

2. DOD's comments present information on operational and strategic analyses and commanders' revised assessments without stating when these analyses and assessments occurred. We revised our report to clarify the timing of the various military assessments for U.S. participation in the SFOR follow-on force.

As discussed in the report, none of the assessments provided to us by DOD showed that the U.S. drawdown decision in January 1998 was based on an operational or troop-to-task analysis of mission options. The troop-to-task analyses done by the U.S. military prior to the drawdown decision, which were the basis of the late October 1997 U.S. military/U.S. European Command assessment, determined the U.S. force structure and force levels necessary to perform (1) the current SFOR mission and (2) a relatively restricted mission in a substantially more favorable operating environment. Neither analysis showed that the U.S. military could accomplish the current SFOR mission with only two combat battalions or 6,900 troops in Bosnia. In contrast, the options document referred to by DOD said that the U.S. military could accomplish the current SFOR mission with only two combat battalions in Bosnia, thereby allowing the U.S. military to draw down to 6,900 troops.

After the U.S. drawdown decision was made, the U.S. military did the troop-to-task analysis for the SFOR follow-on force concurrently with NATO/SFOR and identified ways of reducing force levels in Bosnia to 6,900 troops while still maintaining three U.S. combat battalions in Bosnia. According to officials from NATO military headquarters, DOD, and the U.S. European Command, the U.S. military and NATO began these troop-to-task analyses and the force generation process for the follow-on force in late February 1998. During this process, SACEUR and the SFOR Commander revised their assessments and concluded that SFOR could accomplish the current SFOR mission with the reduced U.S. force levels. According to DOD

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officials, NATO finalized its operational requirements for the SFOR follow-on force in late April 1998 and, in late May 1998, officially approved the operational requirements and decided to draw down SFOR force levels.

# Comments From the Department of State

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.



United States Department of State

Chief Financial Officer

Washington, D.C. 20520-7427

SEP 11 1998

Dear Mr. Hinton:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "BOSIA PEACE OPERATION: Mission, Structure and Transition Strategy of NATO's Stabilization Force," GAO Job Code 711361.

Enclosed are the Department's comments in the form of a letter to Ben Nelson from Ambassador Gelbard. If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Mr. Tim Andrews, Deputy Director, Bosnia Implementation, EUR/BI, at (202) 647-1880.

Sincerely,

*Kathleen J. Charles*  
Kathleen J. Charles, Acting

Enclosure:  
As stated.

cc:  
GAO - Ms. McCloskey  
STATE/S/SR - Amb. Gelbard  
/EUR/BI - Mr. Andrews

Mr. Henry L. Hinton, Jr.,  
Assistant Comptroller General,  
National Security and International Affairs,  
U.S. General Accounting Office.



United States Department of State

Special Representative of the President  
and the Secretary of State for Implementation  
of the Dayton Peace Accords

Washington, D.C. 20520

September 10, 1998

Mr. Benjamin F. Nelson  
Director  
International Relations and Trade Issues  
National Security and International Affairs Division  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Nelson:

I would like to comment on the draft GAO report, "Bosnia Peace Operation: Mission, Structure and Transition Strategy of NATO's Stabilization Force," dated August 28, 1998 (GAO Code 711361).

See comment 1.

As I indicated to your colleagues in our September 9 meeting, I found the report to be good overall. While I understand that GAO was asked to focus principally on SFOR, the larger context of civilian implementation needs to be considered as well. Civilian-military cooperation on Bosnia has been excellent, in Washington and in the field, and is an essential requirement in order to complete our mission successfully. In particular, I think the narrow focus of the report leaves a somewhat misleading impression of the situation overall by focusing only on SFOR's efforts, such as in the area of indicted war criminals, rather than focusing on the total complementary implementation effort. If the GAO team had come to me earlier in the process, this might have been rectified.

See comment 2.

We support OSD's comments on the report, as set forth in Mr. McConnell's September 3, 1998 letter. The MSU is an initiative which is well underway, with more work yet to be done. It is not intended as a substitute for SFOR. Instead, it adds to the capabilities of the International Community to implement all aspects of the Dayton Peace Accords. I particularly want underscore also OSD's characterization of the factors that were considered in the decision to draw U.S. troop levels down to 6,900. This was addressed on the basis



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Appendix VIII  
Comments From the Department of State

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of military recommendations on what it would take to accomplish the mission. I personally participated in every policy-level meeting that considered this subject, and can assure you that "political" considerations were never discussed.

Sincerely,



Robert S. Gelbard

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The following are GAO's comments on the Department of State's letter dated September 11, 1998.

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## GAO Comments

1. We have expanded our discussion of the larger context of military and civilian implementation of the Dayton Agreement, particularly in the area of international efforts to bring war crimes indictees to justice. We also noted that prior GAO reports on the Bosnia peace operation discuss in great detail the larger context of international efforts in Bosnia.<sup>1</sup>
2. We believe that our report accurately reflects the status of the Multinational Specialized Unit's manning and readiness. Our report states that the unit is not a replacement for U.S. or other SFOR combat units. We note that State's assertion that the unit adds to the capabilities of the international community to implement all aspects of the Dayton Agreement goes beyond the unit's role as currently articulated by NATO. As discussed in our report, NATO intends for the unit to enhance SFOR's capability to deal with civil disturbances associated with returns of refugees and displaced persons and the installation of elected officials.

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<sup>1</sup>See Bosnia Peace Operation: Pace of Implementing Dayton Accelerated as International Involvement Increased; Bosnia Peace Operation: Progress Toward Achieving the Dayton Agreement's Goals; and Bosnia Peace Operation: Progress Toward the Dayton Agreement's Goals—An Update.

# Comments From the U.S. European Command

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.



COMMANDER IN CHIEF  
UNITED STATES EUROPEAN COMMAND

September 10, 1998

Dear Mr. Nelson:

This is the United States European Command's (USEUCOM) response to the General Accounting Office final draft report as of 28 August 1998: "BOSNIA PEACE OPERATION: Mission, Structure, and Transition Strategy of NATO's Stabilization Force."

USEUCOM concurs with DoD's response to the draft report dated 3 September 1998, with the following additional comments:

The use of the term "expanded scope" when referring to SFOR military operations connotes an operation that is enlarging and increasing in size and extent. Do not feel this is an accurate reflection of our operations in Bosnia. Through the success of Operations JOINT ENDEAVOR and JOINT GUARD, the military objectives set out in the General Framework for Peace for Bosnia and Herzegovina have been largely achieved, including the special police, who were always under NATO according to annex 1A. SFOR's primary mission is to ensure the continued implementation of the Dayton Accords, and to deter the outbreak of hostilities. SFOR is now in a position to provide broad support to civil implementation, within its existing mandate and capabilities. Progress in military and civil implementation, as well as continuing requirements for deterrence, will be assessed periodically with the aim of continuing to reduce the size and role of SFOR forces commensurate with progress toward achieving NATO's end state.

Reference the report's statement (on pg 3) that "the United States plans to reduce its participation in SFOR to about 6,900 troops in Bosnia by November 1998." The rotation of U.S. forces in June-July 1998 has implemented the new force structure, and in fact, U. S. troop levels in Bosnia fell below 6900 in mid-July. As accurately stated in your draft report, a "spike" in numbers of U.S. troops will be particularly evident during the upcoming relief of 1AD by 1st Cavalry Division in Sep-Oct '98, when we will have up to 11,300 troops in Bosnia. This is necessary to ensure a seamless transition of forces, and is the prudent approach considering the high priority placed on force protection by all commanders. The key point is that U. S. forces have been operating effectively under the Statement of Requirements #11 (SOR #11) force structure since the transition to Operation JOINT FORGE in June 1998.

Reference the Multinational Specialized Unit's contribution to SFOR--have personally visited the Battalion and can report them fully operational and most capable! The second battalion is envisioned to come fully on line, as planned, in the Spring of 1999 as the remaining forces are committed for this purpose.

See comment 1.

See comment 2.

See comment 3.

See comment 4.

Appendix IX  
Comments From the U.S. European  
Command

See comment 5.  
Now on p. 39.

Final area of concern is the draft's impression that our NATO allies are not fully supportive regarding force requirements for the SFOR mission. The "expected contributions" cited in annex 3 (p36) of the draft were SFOR hopes—nothing more—as the countries never were committed to numbers listed. As the force generation process was validated at SHAPE, several of the requirements were refined, or in some instances (such as the target acquisition battery at Sarajevo), were determined to be no longer required. Regarding the Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) personnel, the U.S. was always planned to be the sole provider of PSYOPS personnel to MND(N), with a executed reduction in June '98 that leaves one-third of previous numbers. Where operational requirements were determined to be valid by the Operational Commander, the requirements have been met. The support from NATO and other Troop Contributing Nations has been exceptional.

U.S. European Command appreciates the opportunity to comment on the final draft report.

Sincerely,

  
Wesley K. Clark  
General, U.S. Army

Mr. Benjamin F. Nelson  
Director, International Relations and  
Trade Issues  
National Security and International  
Affairs Division  
U. S. General Accounting Officer  
Washington, D.C. 20548

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The following are GAO's comments on the U.S. European Command's letter dated September 10, 1998.

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## GAO Comments

1. Appendix VII provides DOD's comments on our draft report and our response to them.
2. We believe SFOR's scope of operations has expanded but not beyond the bounds of the Dayton Agreement. We agree with the U.S. European Command that annex 1A of the Dayton Agreement has always called for the NATO-led force in Bosnia—first IFOR and later SFOR—to take control of special police; however, we note that neither NATO-led force began to control special police until mid-1997, after the High Representative had asked NATO to do so. We have added information on this matter to the report. We have also added the command's view that because the Dayton Agreement's military objectives had largely been achieved, SFOR is in a position to provide broad support to civil implementation, within its existing mandate and capabilities.
3. Our report discussed the timing of the U.S. drawdown, but we modified the report to clarify the information.
4. We believe our report accurately depicts the status of the Multinational Specialized Unit. However, we have added the command's view that one of the unit's two battalions is fully operational and most capable, as well as information provided by the command on plans for the second battalion to start operations during the spring of 1999 as forces are committed for this purpose.
5. We did not intend for our report to leave the impression that NATO allies are not fully supportive of force requirements for the SFOR mission; rather, we had intended to describe the U.S. military and NATO/SFOR planning processes for the SFOR follow-on force and to illustrate how operational requirements for the force appeared to be driven by the planned reduction in U.S. forces in Bosnia. Thus, the report included information on NATO lowering its operational requirements for the follow-on force during the force generation process that occurred after the U.S. decision to draw down to 6,900 troops in Bosnia.

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